VALUABLE MONEY PRIZES OFFERED EVERY WEEK.

SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 404. FOR WEEK ENDING SEPTEMBER 26TH, 1896. [ONE PENNY.

1896 PROCLAMATION.

GRAND PIONEER REDUCTION SALE

By Messrs. F. Hodgson & Son, the well-known Carpet Manufacturers of the City of Leeds, will take effect on sight of this advertisement. **Super-eminent.**—The **Queen's Royal** Household **Prudential, Eclipse,** and **Alarm Carpets** and **Hearthrugs,** etc. (Reg.). **Amazingly** interesting, instructive, and detailed **Grand Reduction** Catalogue post free, if, when writing, you mention this paper.

REMARKS.—A lady customer writes complaining that we send out too large a Carpet for the money. Be this so or not, we send out no Carpet measuring less than 6ft. by 9ft.—even for 2s. 11d. **TEST THEM. THEY WILL SURPRISE YOU.**

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(Registered.)

Reversible, with a different pattern on both sides, woven throughout with handsome border to correspond; richly blended in several colours to suit any furniture. Made in 10 sizes only. These Carpets are the production of much care, labour, and forethought, and are made in handsome and elaborate patterns (which are protected by registration). They combine on one side the rich blended colours of the Turkish and Persian, with on the reverse the elegant designs of the Wilton. These goods cannot be distinguished from real Brussels when laid down, and cannot be excelled in durability.

	Each.		Each.
6ft. by 9ft., Reduced Sale Price	4/9	9ft. by 15ft., Reduced Sale Price	12/6
7½ft. by 9ft. " " "	5/11	12ft. by 12ft. " " "	12/9
9ft. by 9ft. " " "	7/6	12ft. by 13½ft. " " "	14/6
9ft. by 10½ft. " " "	8/6	12ft. by 15ft. " " "	15/9
9ft. by 12ft. " " "	9/6	12ft. by 18ft. " " "	19/6
10½ft. by 12ft. " " "	11/6	12ft. by 21ft. " " "	22/6

When ordering please mention if for Bed, Dining, Drawing, or Sitting Room, and any particular colour preferred.

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"The Dowr. Lady Abercromby is pleased with the 'Prudential' Carpet she ordered."

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Lady Hunter Blair writes: "Will Messrs. F. Hodgson & Son send her another 'Prudential' Carpet, same as before, crimson and gold, dimensions, 9ft. by 10½ft. Cheque inclosed."

A Reversible "Prudential" Hearthrug (Reg)., to match above Carpets, sent for 1s. 6d. extra, size 2 yards long, and 1 yard wide.

SPECIAL OFFER.—3 Hearthrugs for 4s. 3d.; or 6 for 8s.; or 12 for 15s. 6d.

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100,000 "ALARM" CARPETS

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Suitable for Sitting-room or Bedroom, Bordered and Woven in Art Colours, large enough to cover any ordinary-sized room, as an advertisement for our goods, thus saving any Middle Profits. Remember these are Woven, not printed, and are made of a material almost equal to Wool. Thousands of these Carpets and Rugs have already been sold at almost double above prices. A Rug sent with Carpet, 10d. extra.

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Value unequalled in the Annals of Advertising. As a favour, kindly Examine and Compare these Carpets.

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If unable to obtain it in your neighbourhood, send 9 stamps for sample bottle; or samples of both Wine Essence and Extract of Herbs, post free for 15 stamps.

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"ABSOLUTELY the BEST VALUE in the WORLD."

MODEL 583 is one of the latest up-to-date designs made in that ideal fabric, The John Noble Cheviot Serge. It has a smart well-cut Bodice, with the back shaped to the figure and the front pleated at the waist.

10/6. There is a pretty Yoke Collar, and the whole is very daintily trimmed. The Skirt is a full, wide, tailor-made design. Price, for complete Costume, only 10/6; safely packed and sent carriage paid for 9d. extra.

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John Noble's Knockabout Frocks,

With long full sleeves, saddle top, and pocket.

Sizes	21	24	27	30	33	36	39	42 45in.
Prices	1/6	2/-	2/6	3/-	3/6	4/-	4/6	5/- 5/6

Sent Carriage Paid 4½d. extra.

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In Boxes, 9½d., 1s. 1½d., and 2s. 9d. each, with full directions.

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S.S. S.S.

PEARSON'S

£100

COUPON.

No. 39

Sept. 26, 1896.

S.S. S.S.

HAIR DESTROYED.

A doctor's widow knows of a simple, inexpensive remedy that permanently destroys the roots, and will forward particulars free to all those afflicted sending stamped envelope. Address Mrs. B. D. WOOD, 4, DUKE STREET, VILLIERS STREET, LONDON, W.

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Permanently cured. A Pamphlet giving sound practical advice and particulars of a successful treatment for a rapid, simple, and inexpensive home cure, forwarded free to all upon receipt of stamped addressed envelope.—Prof. B. L. HOLT, Argyll Chambers, West Strand, London.

Dr. Mackenzie's ARSENICAL TOILET SOAP.

The greatest beautifier in the World. Produces a lovely skin and complexion, and cures spots, pimples, redness, and freckles. The finest and purest soap made. For Eczema and all irritations it is the most emollient and soothing. Absolutely harmless. But beware of the many worthless imitations. Have Dr. Mackenzie's or none. At all Chemists and Stores, 6d. and 1s. a tablet.

Madame Adelina Patti writes from Craig-y-Nos Castle: "I find Dr. Mackenzie's Arsenical Toilet Soap most excellent."

GLOSS JUST LIKE CHINA. Every man likes his shirt, collar, and cuffs to look exactly like china. It is very easy, too, to get the effect. You have only to rub some of Redford's China Gloss on the linen before ironing, not mix it with the starch, and then you have a beautiful polished surface. A shilling box, containing enough to last for a month or two, sent free by post on receipt of thirteenpence by Redford & Son, G. Dept., 30, Oxford Street, Liverpool.

SULPHOLINE LOTION,

For clearing the skin from Spots, Blemishes, Redness, Roughness, giving a Beautiful Complexion and pleasing appearance.

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NEW HARRISON Swift Gold Medal **KNITTER.**

KNITS Stockings ribbed or plain, Gloves and Clothing in Wool, Silk, or Cotton. Instructions Free. Lists free per post. 26 Triumphant Awards, including 7 Gold Medals, for the "Harrison" and "Sun" Machines.

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If you require a reliable remedy for the relief of superfluous fat, send for a box of my "H.D." Pills. No starvation required; you may eat and drink what you like, yet I guarantee to either sex a permanent reduction of 5lb. to 7lb. weekly. They are a harmless vegetable preparation; successful in the most stubborn cases, and improve health and figure. Their action is rapid, certain, safe, tasteless, and highly recommended. Prices, 2s. 9d., 4s. 6d., and 11s., post free, plain wrapper. PROFESSOR F. T. HOLT, Argyll Chambers, West Strand, London.

No. 404.] [ONE PENNY.

For the Week ending September 26th, 1896.

SLEEP NO MORE!

"And then it started like a guilty thing,
Upon a fearful summons."
HAMLET.

BASEST of all men is he who betrays a trust.

Nothing could be urged in the defence of Edgar Mostyn: not youth, or lack of experience, not hastiness, not temptation from others—as far as one might judge not passion. No man standing between good and evil ever had better reasons than he for following the right path, and experience would not suffer him to go wrong by mistake. Yet he sinned—and the sin was at once great and contemptible.

When Basil Redstock had been married about a year, business made it necessary that he should leave his wife and home for several months. There were some mines to be looked after in a wild district where he could not take Eva. A maiden aunt, old, deaf, stupid, came to the house to stay, and several of Eva's companions were expected. But there ought to be a man about, as a protection against burglars. Basil's best friend was Edgar Mostyn, a bachelor, and man-of-the-world, yet one whose reserved speech and upright conduct had always repelled the breath of scandal.

"He is a man," said Basil—and Mostyn knew that he had said it—"to whom I would without hesitation intrust every penny I had in the world—my own good name—everything."

So Mostyn came to live in the house of his friend on his friend's request that he should guard and protect his wife.

At first Eva was never without the company of girl friends. Presently they ceased to come; perhaps it was accidental, perhaps she was less urgent in her invitations. During the last month, she and the old aunt and Edgar Mostyn were alone much of the time. The aunt would grow sleepy in the evenings; besides, she was deaf.

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When Basil Redstock returned, Mostyn, who was a man of perfect self-control, welcomed him with cordial smiles and hearty speech. But the weak woman, sick with terror, scarcely knew what she said and did.

Basil was not suspicious by nature—yet he was not a fool.

On the evening of the third day after the husband's return, as Mostyn sat alone in his bachelor quarters, a note was brought to him. It had been left at the door by a woman. In the trembling, illegible scrawl, he, with difficulty, recognised the handwriting of Eva Redstock. The note read as follows:

"What have I done! I cannot tell how it has happened but he knows all. He said he would kill me if I did not confess, and I was almost crazy. He means to shoot you, I know, for he took his revolver and went away. I wish he had killed me—I wish I were dead."

Mostyn stared blankly at the paper for some moments after he had finished reading its message. Here was a catastrophe in a form he had not foreseen; for such weakness was quite out of the pale of his understanding. At last he tore the note to fragments, and tossed it into the fire.

"Well," he said, with a savage scowl, "it is a scrape—a bad one. So he means to shoot, eh?"

Presently Mostyn arose and opened a drawer in his desk. He took out a revolver—not a toy article, but one of the sort that can be made to shoot straight, and to kill—and began to turn it over in his hands. A touch on a half-concealed spring, and the chambers rolled out.

From the same drawer he brought a piece of cloth, a small bottle of oil, and some cartridges.

It took a little time to clean, oil, and load the weapon. While he was thus engaged, Mostyn thought the situation over after this wise:

"He does not know how to shoot, and if I meet him in the street and he draws, I can safely risk his first fire. I know that revolver of his; before he is ready for a second, I can—h'm, it would be a bad business, if I should

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—the whole thing is going to come out anyway, if he tries the shooting business. Ruin me, of course; but I don't care to give up my life just because a woman is a fool. What a fool she was! If she had only denied it, that would have been something—but to confess all!—Yet how if he should come on me from behind? Well, that is not like Basil Redstock. He is a chivalrous fellow, and I imagine will not shoot without warning."

When the pistol was loaded and in perfect order, Mostyn slipped it into a leather sheath and left it upon the desk. Then he sat down by the fire and thought—not of the immediate danger—for he was ready now to meet that—but of the man and the woman who had that day lived a tragedy on his account. Such thoughts were surely not pleasant; yet he remained an hour beyond the time when he usually retired, staring into the flames.

The living apartments of Mr. Edgar Mostyn were two rooms in the second storey of a large residence building. The parlour was in front and looked out over the street. The neighbourhood was quiet, although not far distant from a populous thoroughfare. When he was ready to go to bed, Mostyn, as was his custom, threw wide open one of the front windows. He stood for a moment gazing into the street, which was brightly lighted by the moon and empty of people. Then he closed the blinds, and went into the inner room.

There was in the lower hall of the house a large clock which struck the hours. Shortly after Mostyn stepped into bed, midnight sounded. He lay very still for a time and thought of Eva. Then he turned over into another part of the bed and thought about Basil. And presently he heard the clock strike one.

Then he became restless and tossed about. It was a bad scrape, and it worried him. Even if he saved his life he must expect to part with his reputation, for the affair would make a horrible uproar. What a fool that woman was—what an unspeakable fool!

Two o'clock.

The bed had become disagreeably warm, and he raised himself on his elbow, that the cool air might come under the clothes. The attitude made him think of the way actors die on the stage. Would a man who was shot take this position? He wondered how it would be with himself, if that first bullet from Basil Redstock's weapon should take effect. Pooh! It was a toy affair, incapable of hitting a mark ten feet away. There was very little chance; of course there was a chance, merely a chance. He dropped back in bed.

Then began to see pictures of what might happen. He is walking down the street—Basil comes up from behind—calls out to him—shoots—he falls into the gutter. He is coming out of the front door of the house—someone calls to him—it is Basil Redstock—a shot—he falls forward on his face on the steps. He is at his desk in the office—a noise of someone speaking—he looks up—it is Basil Redstock—a report—a flash of light—smoke—he drops out of the chair in a heap on the floor—blood on the carpet.

Now the pictures began to follow one another more rapidly. He was whirled along through the various places where business or pleasure might take him in the course of the day; always it was the same—a sudden cry—Basil Redstock—a shot—Mostyn falls—blood. As they came faster, the details grew dimmer, until at last the whole seemed an indistinct haze, in the midst of which he could only see Basil Redstock, with arm upraised and he himself falling—falling——

He was nearing sleep. One moment more and he would have been free from the torment of consciousness, but in that instant he heard a cry from the street, loud and clear, the voice of Basil Redstock.

"*Mostyn! Coward! Come out and be shot!*"

He sprang up in bed—stunned into terror. After the last word was spoken, there was stillness, stillness in the house and in the street—stillness so complete that it roared in his ears.

There was no chance to think it a dream, for on hearing his name called Mostyn had instantly shaken off his drowsiness, and was thoroughly awake to what followed. There could be no question either about the origin of the cry; Basil Redstock—crazed, perhaps—stood in the street—in the middle of the street—before the house, and was calling to him to come out. Evidently he was armed, and the instant Mostyn should appear would begin to shoot.

Mostyn climbed slowly and noiselessly out of bed, and groped his way into the front room. He had no distinct plan of action, but when, by the moonlight that struggled through the chinks of the blinds, he saw the revolver lying on the desk, he took it out of its sheath and went towards the window that overlooked the street.

Here he could see plainly, yet not be seen.

There was no one in the street. It was empty and silent, as when Mostyn had looked down upon it a few hours before.

Where was Redstock? Had he gone away, or was he hiding in the dark shadows? Mostyn strained his eyes but could see no sign of him.

Suddenly he remembered that the cry must have been heard by others in the house—and, for that matter, in all the neighbourhood about—for it had rung out loud and shrill in the quiet night. He listened, expecting to hear the sound of people moving about. But silence continued. Minutes passed—two or three, five, ten—but no sign of Basil Redstock in the street—no sound in the house.

So he turned and put away the revolver on the desk and went back to bed. Now he began to think it all over anew.

The weakness and folly of Eva Redstock had been a surprise, but, in the name of heaven, what possessed Basil? Was he insane—or drunk—or had he actually thought that Mostyn would respond to such a challenge and "come out and be shot"? Really, it was quite incomprehensible. But it was none the less a disgrace.

And four sounded from the clock.

"Four in the morning! and not a wink of sleep yet. Three must have struck when I was only half conscious. In an hour more it will be daylight. I must get to sleep or I shall be a wreck to-morrow—a wreck—a wreck."

"*Mostyn! Coward! Come out and be shot!*"

The words struck into the man, half dozing in his warm bed, with a sudden and icy chill. They sounded very loud, as if Redstock were within a few feet of the house—on the pavement or the steps. There was no longer question but the cry must have been heard, at least by those who occupied rooms in the front part of the dwelling, and Mostyn waited breathlessly for something to happen. But the stillness which followed the cry remained unbroken.

At last he sprang from the bed, shivering like a man with the ague, and peered again through the blinds of the front windows. There was no one to be seen. The moonlight had given away to the first streaks of dawn; and, as he stood looking out, the clock below struck the hour of five.

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To attempt sleep now was idle, and he slowly began to dress. The cry was not heard again.

When Mostyn was ready to leave the room, he put the sheathed revolver into his pocket. He stood for a moment in the front doorway and looked searchingly across and along the street, before he ventured out upon the steps. On his way down town, he slackened his pace at every corner and glanced about, right and left and behind, in the stealthy manner of a man who is afraid of his own fears. Several times he imagined that he saw Redstock coming, and he stepped into a doorway and waited with his hand on his hip-pocket, until the suspected person cam e near enough to show that he was not the man.

"I did not know that I was such a coward," he said; "I am not a coward. A night without sleep has made me nervous. Besides, if I am not always on my guard, I may be taken unawares."

He went to his office, and, lighting a fire, began to turn over the work which he had planned for the day. The place was deserted and still. A sudden, rapid step approaching his door brought him to his feet with his hand behind him. It was only the newsboy, who, as he tossed the paper through the half-open door, caught a glimpse of the white face and staring eyes of Mostyn, and thought that the man must be struggling with the latter end of a debauch.

"This will not do," said Mostyn, mechanically taking up the paper; "I must control myself better or people will begin to suspect——"

He unfolded the sheet and began to read, his eyes running hastily across the row of headlines. Suddenly he cried out with a word that was between an oath and a prayer, and then grew so still that one might have thoughthim changed to stone.

Basil Redstock was dead. He had shot himself—accidentally, the paper said—through the heart.

The article filled the better part of a column, for Mr. Redstock was a well-known man, and his death was a strange, sad tragedy, over which the reporter fondly lingered. He had gone to his office, so it was stated, on the evening previous with the design of making up some arrears of correspondence. In tossing the papers in his desk about, he had come upon a revolver, which he had picked up and started to load. Through some carelessness on his part, the weapon was fired while pointed at his breast, and the shot had proved fatal. The report was heard by several persons in the building, and, forcing the door, they found a tableau which told the entire story as plainly as though each act had been witnessed and recorded. On the desk were letters laid out to be answered and recorded. Drawers were open and papers scattered about, showing that he had been in search of some document when he happened upon the weapon. In the centre of the desk was a box of cartridges and the pistol, ramrod, and cleaner, and near the feet of the dead man lay the weapon, four chambers empty, one loaded, and one filled with a shell.

This discovery was made at eleven o'clock in the evening.

When he reached the end of the narrative, Mostyn laid down the paper and stared at the wall. He was dazed for the moment, and could not make an effort to accommodate the facts that he had just read with what he had known before. At last it became clear to him, for one thing, that Redstock was dead, and he heaved a long sigh of relief.

That danger was passed.

Was it an accident? he asked himself; or was it not more likely a suicide, with this arrangement of things about the desk cunningly designed for the purpose of throwing off suspicion? Well, what did it matter? Mostyn's secret was safe.

"Safe," he muttered: "safe—but hold;—the people at the house—they heard him cry out to me from the street—they must have heard it—why, that can't be—let me see—eleven o'clock?—but it was three o'clock when he called to me—dead at eleven—I know it was three—yes, and later it was five—the second time—impossible—there is some mistake—the paper is wrong—no, I am wrong—but I certainly heard it—three o'clock—eleven o'clock—why, that is five hours—yes, five hours."

Repeating it over and over did not make it any clearer. In the end, the only conclusion which Mostyn reached was that something was wrong—and this meant nothing at all.

As he was ostensibly one of the nearest friends of the dead man, it was natural that he should make inquiries about the accident. A small amount of investigation satisfied him, beyond all doubt, that Basil Redstock had shot himself intentionally, and also that he was dead by eleven o'clock in the evening.

"But that was before I went to bed," thought Mostyn.

That evening he expected to hear his friends at home refer to the strange noises of the night before; but no one spoke of them. Then Mostyn himself told about a drunken man who was crying out in front of the house—about three o'clock in the morning; and surprise was manifested by his listeners. None of them had heard a sound.

Having had no sleep in thirty-six hours, Edgar Mostyn was inclined to retire early. He went to his room at nine o'clock, and as a preliminary of undressing, took the revolver out of his pocket, and put it away in the desk. The act brought back to his mind the singular half-dreams of the previous night when he had repeatedly seen himself shot and felt himself falling. After he got into bed, in the dark and stillness, the weird and awful panorama began once more to whirl past his tightly closed eyes. In vain he tried to drive it away. There was always the same scene—Basil Redstock aiming the weapon, firing, and Mostyn falling.

At last, in spite of it all, he was becoming drowsy, and almost ready to sleep.

"*Mostyn! Coward! Come out and be shot!*"

There it was again!—loud and clear, almost a shriek. It came from the middle of the street, and was the voice—yes, plainly the voice—of Basil Redstock. Why, he was dead! But this was his voice. What did it mean? A dream? A hoax! Or madness?

Before Mostyn knew what he did, he stood by the window looking into the street. There was no one to be seen. He shivered, and turned back towards the bedroom.

Then he heard a noise of talking in the hall just outside his door. Plainly this time the cry had roused the house; and he hurriedly slipped on a dressing-gown, to be ready, should anyone enter the room.

No one came. Presently he opened the door, and looked out. Two men stood at the front end of the hall in the large bay-window which overhung the street. They were fellow lodgers of Mostyn, and they were conversing with apparent unconcern.

"Did you hear it?" asked Mostyn.

"Hear what?" said one of the men

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"The—the crazy man yelling in the street."

"Not a sound."

"How long have you been standing here?"

"Ten—fifteen minutes."

Mostyn noticed that one of the windows was open. How was it possible that the cry should have penetrated to his bedroom, to rouse him—half-asleep—and yet be unnoticed by these men standing by the open window.

As he turned this question over in his mind, gazing in dumb wonder at the man who had last spoken, the words came again to his startled ears, this time in a wild and terrible yell.

"*Mostyn! Coward! Come out and be shot!*"

It was such a cry as might have belched from the jaws of some fierce animal that had acquired the power of speech. It seemed to echo and re-echo through all the house, making the windows rattle and the doors shake, and Mostyn listened for an answering uproar. He looked to see the men at the window turn upon him with horror in their faces, and demand to know what it meant.

But after the sound of the last word died away, the house remained still. The men at the window did not move.

One of them said: "The street is unusually quiet to-night."

"Yes," answered the other; and Mostyn staggered back into his room.

Then the muscles of his body relaxed, and he tumbled into an awkward heap on the floor. It was not a faint; it was the utter exhaustion that comes over a man when, for the first time, he beholds the impossible existing.

An hour passed, and the voice in the street—or in his brain—had been silent. He dragged himself to the bed and fell heavily upon it. Sick and weary with doubt, debate and questioning, he closed his eyes and once more sought for sleep.

"*Mostyn! Coward! Come out and be shot!*"

Ah! There it sounded again. Well, let it sound. He would sleep—sleep in spite of it.

"*Mostyn! Coward! Come out and be shot!*"

Louder this time, so terribly loud that Mostyn leapt and fell back, trembling like a frightened child.

And now the awful longing for sleep began to grow upon the brain, as hunger gnaws upon the body.

In the grey of early dawn he gave up the struggle, arose and dressed, and went out of the house to walk in the streets.

He began to drink—whisky, brandy, and, at last, absinthe. It was all like so much water. Thoroughly frightened, towards the close of the long day he called to see his physician.

"What shall I do?" he asked; "I cannot sleep."

The doctor looked at his haggard face and bloodshot eyes, felt his pulse, and listened to his heart. "Overwork and worry," he said; "you must be careful."

The physician was to Mostyn an intimate friend, so he told a large part of the story: how he heard the voice of a dead man calling to him from the street. Dr. Morey listened, with deep interest.

"Tortured and outraged nerves," he said, "played upon by the imagination."

"I do not imagine I hear it," said Mostyn; "I do hear it—plainly—as I hear you speaking now."

"Indeed!" exclaimed the doctor, looking at him askance; "is it so bad as that?"

"Mostyn," he continued, after a moment's pause, "why don't you humour yourself in this matter? It may do good. The next time you hear the cry, respond to it. Go out in the street, and actually convince yourself beyond all doubt that no one is there."

Then he gave Mostyn a prescription, and offered him a hypodermic syringe—to be used if all other means failed.

It was now the third night—sixty hours passed without sleep—and evening was at hand. "Another night like the last," thought Mostyn, "and I shall go mad." He scarcely dared go to his room, although the desire for sleep raged within him like a caged beast.

At nine o'clock he lay down on the bed, without removing his clothes. He purposed to be ready, when the call should come, to run down into the street and defy his imagination with fact.

Hardly had his head touched the pillow, when, for the third time, the visions of death began to flit before him. Again and again he witnessed the old picture, always changing, yet always the same—Basil Redstock aiming and discharging the weapon, and he falling—falling. At last it seemed that sleep could no longer elude him.

In that moment came the cry—louder, fiercer, and more terrible than ever:

"*Mostyn! Coward! Come out and be shot!*"

Before it ceased ringing in his ears, he was leaping down the stairs towards the door that led to the street.

And now mark how Fate prepares for her victims. In a public-house near by two men had been playing cards, and pouring liquor into their brains. A word—a blow—a slash with a knife—a revolver is out—one runs—the other pursues. Now the fugitive comes round the corner into the street where stands the house of Edgar Mostyn. The door opens and the haunted man rushes down to the pavement. Once more he hears the cry reverberating in the tones of the dead:

"*Mostyn! Coward! Come out and be shot!*"

And he falls forward upon his face, his heart pierced by the chance-aimed bullet.

Charles Dwight Willard.

RESULT OF JUMBLED STORY COMPETITION.

No. 10.

The first prize of £5 goes this week to Mr. F. Revelt, 2, Pond Terrace, Lower Clapton, London, whose attempt was the only one completely correct. Each of the competitors whose names appear below have received £1, their solutions being the next most correct sent in:

Miss Sullivan, Hill House, Bandon, co. Cork, Ireland.
Mr. H. P. Wright, 72, Evilina Road, Nunhead, S.E.
Miss Bessie Adams, The Cottage, The Heath, Crayford, Kent.
Mr. E. Scants, 43, Gwendwr Road, West Kensington.
Mrs. C. C. Sloane, 33, Regent Square, W.C.

RESULT OF POST-CARD COMPETITION.

No. 11.

The London guinea goes this week to Mr. C. H. Ward, 32, Tasman Road, Stockwell; and the provincial guinea to Mr. E. A. Slaney, 49, Newport Road, Stafford.

The solution of the problem was:

The Last King of Atlantis.

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A Legend of Amsterdam.

On the Keizersgracht stands a grey and gloomy pile of nondescript architecture, with seven horrible, fantastic heads, carved upon its grim, mould-covered, stone façade.

Generations ago it was the property and the residence of a retired East India merchant who had amassed almost fabulous wealth, and who lived in the most unostentatious and solid style peculiar to the prosperous *bourgeoisie* of Amsterdam.

It was the custom of this good gentleman to leave his city home early in the season for his country seat in the Haarlemmer Meer, and during his absence the house on the Keizersgracht was left in the charge of an old servant—Anne—who belonged to a class fast dying out in Holland, if not already a feature of its past.

This faithful woman had nursed her master through earliest infancy, and, according to the old custom, had remained in his service after his marriage, attending his young wife and caring for his children in turn. When wife and children had passed away, the responsibilities of the household rested entirely on the willing shoulders of the loyal Anne, and she comforted her master in his days of sorrow, guarded his interests—knowing no others—as her own, and devoted her age, as she had given her youth, to his service.

The other servants came under her control, but during the summer she sent them away to the country house, preferring the peace and quiet of the deserted home to their troublesome society, and undertaking the task of the annual September house-cleaning entirely without assistance. She dearly loved every nook and corner of this old house, where her master and his dear, dead children had first seen the light of the world, and where the eyes of the poor little ones had one after another closed upon it for ever.

She wanted not frivolous maids tripping about among the rooms, bothering her under the guise of assistance. It was a labour of love to get everything in readiness for the return of the master, and she grudged neither time nor strength in the waxing of the floors until one could easily break one's neck by an unsteady step on the slippery surface—in polishing the old brass until it showed one's face as in a mirror, and in carefully dusting and re-arranging the quaint old Delft and Doulton which, together with many a heathenish curio from the strange countries to which her master had journeyed, lined the shelves of cabinets and adorned the tops of the presses and chests.

She carefully wiped the scabbard of one long, curving sword and then unsheathed the blade. Dear Heaven! but it was rusty. Only after a vigorous pull could she drag it from the sheath. Why not rub it up a bit? She was very tired, and this was really an unnecessary, added exertion. But Anne hated rust almost as much as she hated dust, and it was such a satisfaction to her to feel that everything, even these ridiculous swords in their scabbards, were shining with cleanliness. She set about the task, and in half-an-hour it was an accomplished fact.

A storm had been threatening all the afternoon. The wind was sweeping across the canal, the sky was black, the rain beat down with sudden fierceness, and, as she closed the last shutter at the front of the house, Anne saw the figures of two men huddled against the wide, projecting porch, apparently seeking shelter from the rising storm.

In the old Dutch houses, the cellar, or rather, an extension of it, runs out beneath the front porch, and receives light from a small, square aperture cut in the stone. This opening also permits a current of air from the windows of the main cellar, which are larger, also square and cut in the wall, a few inches above the street.

These windows were protected by light shutters. The opening in the front wall was left unprotected, for the stout door at the head of the cellar steps was provided with bolts and bars, and considered a sufficient defence against possible visitors who chose to enter the house by way of the cellar.

Anne placed her candle on the steps, closed the shutters to keep out the driving rain, and busied herself in collecting the firewood strewn over the floor of the cellar. This led her gradually towards the outer cellar, and during a sudden lull in the storm she distinctly heard the sound of voices in subdued conversation.

Advancing noiselessly, she peered through the opening in the wall.

The two men who had sought comparative shelter from the storm were still huddled against the porch. Anne could not see their faces—she was too far below

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She set about the task.

them, but what they said was perfectly audible, and while she was puzzling over a certain familiar tone in the voice of one of the men, the import of his words fell with a chilling force, which crushed in her every other thought.

"It could be managed without the slightest difficulty," he said. "The old woman is alone in the house, and we can step in here—one after the other."

He indicated with a motion of his foot the opening near which they stood. Anne could have touched it by stretching out her hand. She trembled violently with fear, and was obliged to grasp the stone ledge of the window for support.

"All very good," whispered the second voice; "but if, as you say, there is a strong door at the top of the cellar steps, how are we to get into the upper part of the house, after all?"

"How?" said the first speaker. "There will be seven of us in all. We shall have the necessary implements. We shall break through the door."

"And while we are doing all this," whispered the other excitedly, "what is to prevent the old woman from hearing us—from giving the alarm—from giving us into custody? And then, what of all this great treasure? For that matter, how do you know that anything has been left in the house?"

His companion interrupted him with a contemptuous laugh.

"One question at a time, my friend," he began coolly.

And again Anne recognised something strangely familiar in the soft, sneering voice.

"If, as you say, the old woman hears us at work, and cries out, who will hear her on the Keizersgracht, when all Amsterdam will crawl indoors? How long, too, do you think it will take seven men and a strong axe to cut through a few bolts? Bah! One, two taps, and it is done; a third tap for the old woman, who will doubtless be standing ready to take it, and so much the better, since dead women, like dead men, tell no tales."

Again he laughed disagreeably.

"As for the treasure, I know the house, and the ways of the people, and you will kindly remember that I do not often bungle in these little affairs. However," he added carelessly, "if you are timid, there are still six of us; and, should you leave us in the lurch, you will, at least, keep our secret. *Of that I am quite sure.*"

He spoke with a peculiar emphasis.

The other rejoined instantly:

"Enough! I will be one of you. Now, you wish me to remain here and keep watch while you go in search of the others. Give me your plan now; it will save time and talk."

Anne clung desperately to the window-sill in spite of her shaking limbs, which threatened no longer to support her weight. She was dazed—confused by the revelation of this horrible plan of robbery and murder. Yes, *her* murder! That was what they were plotting to accomplish. Dear Heaven! What could she do? At least, she must not lose a word.

"Do not leave this spot until I return. Should the old servant leave the house, strangle her from behind."

Anne, with difficulty, repressed a cry of agony.

"I will bring the others as near the house as I dare, and imitate the howl of a dog. If everything is quiet, and we can approach, you repeat the sound. If you are silent, I shall know that the unexpected has happened. We understand each other thoroughly now. One thing more. As I said before, this window," tapping the wall behind him again with his foot, "is better than the others; it has no shutters, and will necessitate less noise near the street. It is just wide enough to admit a man head first, and is not more than three feet from the floor; one can feel for the ground with one's hands, and so draw in the rest of the body. You had best enter first, I last; by that means we shall keep a watch on the others. Give a low '*Cuckoo*' when you are safely on your feet within—I shall tell the others to do the same. So, I go now to the 'Roode Leenw,' where the others are waiting, and we will return as soon as it is possible to do so with safety. How lucky it's such a black night. We can begin our work early."

He moved away, Anne intently watching.

"Wait!" called the other softly.

A dim shape rose again, close beside the window.

"You are sure about the treasure? Come, now, is there enough for seven?"

"Ay, man," was the reply; "and for eight—we shall need a man outside to give an alarm if necessary. I tell you there is not only money, but a service of solid gold, and another of silver. In better days I have eaten off both!"

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He was gone.

Anne, unable longer to stand, sank despairingly to the ground.

She was unconscious of the darkness, for the candle end she had brought into the cellar had long ago burned itself out on the stone steps.

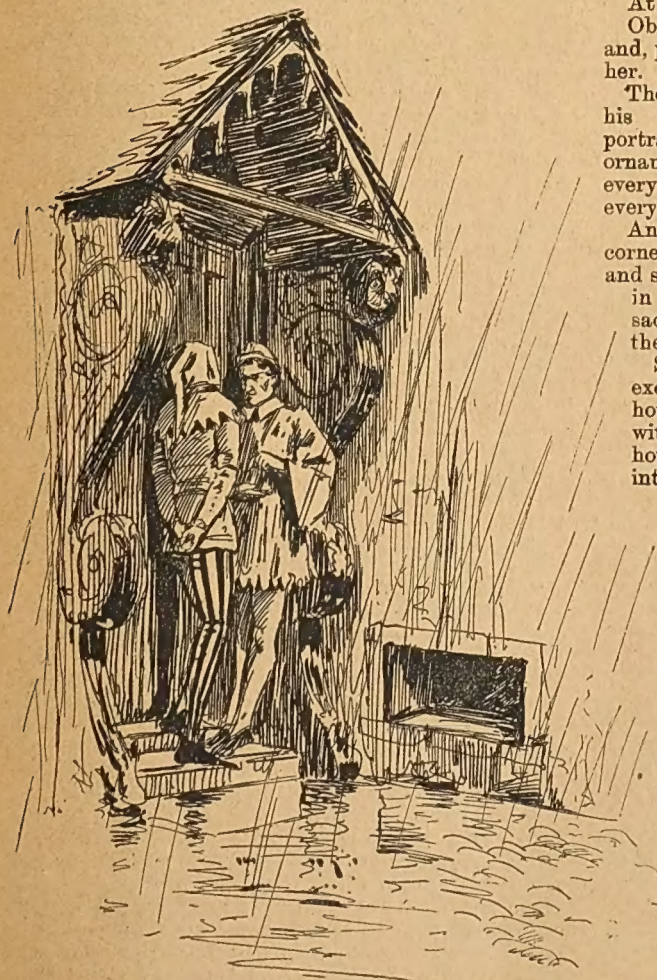
She covered her face with her hard, old hands, and a few heavy tears crept through the knotted fingers. She had lived an honest life. She had served her master faithfully. She had hoped to close her eyes peacefully, at last, in his service. To die to-night, to be murdered, struck with an axe beneath this very roof, where she had spent nearly her whole life, or *strangled from behind*, should she try to escape from the house! Horrible! Horrible! Would Providence let such a thing be?

She had suddenly a stupid sensation of being another than herself. The rain beat fiercely down. The wind sobbed and moaned about the house, then tore madly over the canal, lashing the placid water to fury. A bell in the town tolled ten strokes, muffled and irregular, through the noises of the storm.

Ten o'clock! So late!

Anne struggled to her feet.

What was she doing here, weeping, inactive, when her life was at stake? Surely there was some way to prevent this awful, needless, crime! This man without, watching, waiting, to strangle her, he could not see in all directions at once. They had not counted on their plan being overheard. They would not expect strategy from her. There were the windows at the back of the house! She could drop from one of them, and, by making a long detour, reach a neighbour, or even the watch in the town. There was a chance of her meeting the other wretches, but it was one in twenty. Here, in the house, she had no chance at all.



The two men . . . . were still huddled against the porch.

Dear Heaven! He was right, the villain! How long would it take seven men and a strong axe to break down a few bolts? She had no time to lose.

She crept through the darkness straight to the cellar steps—she knew every inch of the ground—made her way softly to the door above, opening it as cautiously as though a sound might steal through stone walls and wooden shutters to the wicked ears without.

In the kitchen she lighted a candle, and, shading it with her hand as she passed before the windows, moved quickly towards the dining-room, at the back of the house, the windows of which were consequently furthest from the watcher on the Keizersgracht.

At the door of the library she paused.

Obeying an irresistible impulse, she entered the room, and, placing the candle on a small table, she looked about her.

There was her master's favourite chair drawn before his writing-table, his books, his pictures. The portraits of his children and his wife. The curious ornaments on the shelves, in niches in the walls—everything dearest to him was in the room—yes! and everything of most value.

Anne's eyes fell on the metal-bound chest in the corner. Within it were the two services of plate—gold and silver—heirlooms in the family, and more precious in the eyes of her master than the rolls of bills and sacks of coins and the cases of jewels stored beside them.

She wondered vaguely, in the midst of her strong excitement, how this hiding-place as well as the house itself had become so well known to the robber with the strangely familiar voice. Alas! in an hour's time, perhaps in less, all this would have passed into his hands, this dear room, almost sacred to her, would be desecrated by the presence of these murderous ruffians, and she, the faithful one, who loved the belongings of her master, as she loved her master himself, would be flying along the Keizersgracht, flying for her life.

What! She would then be running away? For her life? Yes, to be sure.

A doubt, perplexing, agonising, crept upon the old servant—slowly at first, then it assumed strength in her thoughts, merging at last into the certainty of a forceful conviction.

Her place was here—here—to defend what had been given into her charge? How? It mattered not. With her life, if need be. This would be better than the abandonment of duty.

A certain exaltation, following upon this righteous resolve, seemed to deprive of all its bitterness even the certainty of the terrible death which was fast stealing upon her. They would find her here, in this room, the dear master and his servants—they would find her dead, *murdered*, beside the press, cut down at

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her post of duty! The master would shed tears at this affecting sight, and he would know that she had been faithful unto death. Yes! She would be faithful—to-night—as through all the past she had been to him, and to what was his.

She looked again about the room in which she now knew she was to die. Her eyes lingered lovingly on each familiar feature of its furnishings. They rested on the swords she had been cleaning that evening—the last duty she would ever perform in this house which had so long been her charge. No! not the last—one was still to come.

She moved slowly towards the weapons, and laid her hand on one of them—a great broadsword, with a blade as thick as an axe. Moved by some strange influence, Anne unsheathed the weapon, clutched it firmly with both hands, turning it slightly, so that the dim light from the candle played on the dazzling steel.

A single dull note sounded from the town bell. Half-past ten. Perhaps even now her fate was creeping upon her, stealthily along the Keizersgracht.

Remembering the signal, she listened intently for the howling of a dog, but no sound came to her save the moaning of the wind and the beating of the rain.

Suppose the cry was lost in the storm, and that at this moment a head was being thrust through the cellar window, and a pair of murderous hands reaching for the ground!

Her own hands closed nervously on the weapon in her grasp, and unconsciously she lifted it as if to strike a blow.

The action was suggestive—a host of thoughts crowded swiftly upon it, but thoughts so terrifying that the old woman, after abandoning herself to them for one delirious instant, fell suddenly on her knees, and prayed God to snatch them from her heart.

But they pressed in even upon her prayer, and even while upon her knees, with eyes upraised to Heaven, she found herself plotting, planning to foil these cowardly robbers with their own weapons—how she might with this good sword in her hand, station herself by the little window in the cellar; how each man would enter alone, offering his head, as it were, for the blow. The cry was known to her.

Why was she praying to God to help her to resist this voice in her heart, since He Himself must have bidden it speak? Was it not right to defend one's life—"an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth." And, strongest conviction of all—in this way alone could she risk her life to some purpose. Should she succeed, the treasure was safe. Here, on the contrary, of what avail the sacrifice of her life, since the robbers would step over her dead body to rifle the safe of its contents.

"My God! Have mercy upon me!" whispered the old servant, struggling to her feet and seizing the weapon which had fallen to the floor at her side. She took the candle in the other hand, placing first a few matches on the edge of the candlestick; then, closing the library door softly, she swiftly made her way to the cellar steps. Here she extinguished the light and removed her shoes.

Descending the steps without haste, she moved towards the outer cellar, listening intently for the howling of a dog above the confusion of the storm.

She had not long to wait.

As the instigator of the robbery had said—the elements, wild and wicked, lent their aid to the furtherance of the evil deed.

Anne laid her formidable weapon on the ground convenient to her hand, and then fell upon her knees. Again the horror of what she was about to do closed upon her senses.

"*Thou shalt not kill!*"

The words rang in her ears and were graven in flaming letters in the darkness about her. She was intensely, almost superstitiously religious, but perhaps the fanaticism to which her nature was prone found its greatest expression in her idolatry of her master, and the fetish-like reverence with which she worshipped even his smallest belongings.

The struggle between these two passions of a long, narrow life was sharp and severe. But it was also short.

The words of the simple prayer: "My God, pity me! My God, show me what is right!" repeated again and again, died away suddenly in the old servant's throat. The prolonged howl of a dog sounded above wind and rain. In a moment it was answered by another howl much nearer to the house.

With the necessity for immediate action came the requisite courage. There was no further need of prayer, as there was no further hesitation.

Muffled, stealthy footsteps approached the house. Not a word was spoken that could be overheard by the woman, who stood rigid, with upraised arms, ready to deal the fatal strokes, her burning eyes fixed upon the shadowy opening in the wall so faintly outlined against the darkness of the night.

But her eyes, grown accustomed to the gloom, saw plainly the rounder, darker outline of the man's head which was thrust cautiously forward through the opening; saw even where the line of hair ended sharply against the back of the neck; saw by some second sense of sight where the shoulders followed the head, and the arms were drawn slowly in, one after another, and were extended downwards to reach the ground.

Now!

There was a vibrant shock, a slight resistance; then it went on cleaving through a life. The head fell with a heavy, sickening sound, prolonged by a soft gurgling. And all this with such hideous speed, such appalling silence.

The woman's head swam, and she staggered as she moved a step or two nearer to seize the headless body and drag it through the window. Then she must stoop and push it aside—*for the next!*

And the signal! She had almost forgotten. Where was her voice?

She made a fearful effort, but the sound—rough, husky, yet harsh; could it be her voice?

"Cuckoo!"

She shivered with anxiety. Would they detect the strangeness of the voice, suspect a trap—fly? Oh! If God would have it so! Suppose, indeed, He did not sanction this awful bloodshed! Was not this murder? And murder deliberately planned, and not one victim, but seven! The prayers rose again to Heaven—this time voiceless, but the same poor words went up from the tortured soul.

"My God! Pity me! Show me *what* is right!"

A second head, a second blow to sever it from the body, after a pause, as before, to gain the same advantage, only this time an added horror, since the falling head rolled between her feet, and, when afraid to risk a miss-step, she stooped to push it aside with her hands, they touched the hair and beard, wet and warm with blood. Its sickening odour remained upon them, and shaking as with ague, yet with the heat of fever in her brain, Anne dragged the second body after the

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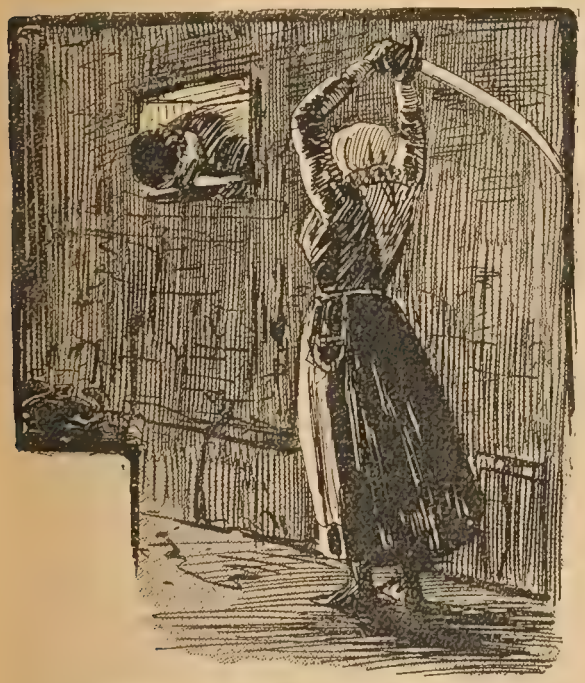
first, and, as it was that of a slight man, her strong arms lifted it from the ground, and flung it back into the cellar.

This time she gave the signal in a clearer voice, and as she again took her position to wait for the third victim, she was conscious of a certain lightness, a vague exhilaration, which she could not have analysed had she tried. Her lips still moved in silent prayer, but unconsciously to herself, the words of her supplication had changed, and she intreated only for strength; yes! strength to kill!

The third man came quietly to his fate, as had the two before him, but with the fourth it was different.

He had followed closely on his companion, and Anne had not had time to push aside the preceding body before aiming a blow at his neck.

His hands, feeling for the floor, came in contact with the gaping throat from which the blood still streamed, and passed swiftly over it to the lifeless arms and shoulders.



The third man came quietly to his fate.

"What is this?" he muttered. "Where are you?"

Receiving no reply, he tried vainly to wriggle back as he had come, through the narrow opening from which he dangled head downwards. But his struggle was short and his fate differed from that of his companions only in that his upraised head met the descending sword which crashed through his skull, cleaving it, and striking only one-half from the body.

There was no indecision, no fear, no remorse in the action of the woman who seized the limp figure and drew it in through the window with one vigorous movement of her steady arm. There was no hesitation in the rough voice which gave the cry to which the fifth robber responded. Into the limbs, stiffened by years of labour, a new strength was creeping. The thin blood of age was leaping and dancing like the hot torrent which courses through the veins of youth, urging it to desperate acts of heroism, or of evil. The wrinkled face of the old servant grew flushed and eager; her dim eyes sparkled. The smell of blood was in her nostrils, and they quivered like those of a wild beast. Her thin lips parted over the toothless gums in a smile of hideous cruelty.

The lust of murder was upon her.

The sixth head fell with its horrible, heavy sound beneath a terrific blow from the avenging sword, and angrily, as one impatient of delay, Anne snatched the body of the man roughly by the belt, and flung it violently behind her.

"Cuckoo!" she cried at the window, and her voice was like the growl of an enraged brute.

This time, the head put through the window was instantly withdrawn and a murmur of hushed voices ensued.

The woman within stamped on the ground in her impatience.

She thrust her foot forward. It touched some soft, heavy object. The headless body of a man. She kicked it furiously. Then, as the murmuring continued and the delay waxed longer, she became possessed of rage, and fell to hacking with the sword in her hand in all directions—to the right, to the left, wherever she thought a body lay.

Wait! Suppose it might be heard from without. Anne paused in this drunken carnival of blood, sobered by the fear that the seventh victim might escape her. She turned again to the window. The voices had ceased.

A head was thrust through the opening.

"Are you all there?" whispered a cautious voice. "Is everything all right?"

The woman with the uplifted sword feared to answer, thinking her voice, so near him, might betray her. She had grown cunning in even this short madness that had come upon her.

She bent forward with incredible swiftness, and, before the head could be withdrawn, she seized it firmly by the hair. The man uttered a stifled oath, and struggled to free himself. He might as well have battled with an avalanche. The crazed creature twisted her hard fingers in and out of his hair, dragging his head down inch by inch, and so holding him, as a child might hold a doll, with one hand, she swung her weapon high in the air, and struck off his head with the other. But the body, over-weighted on the outer side of the sill, fell headless into the street.

A shriek of horror rose from the almost paralysed watcher on the Keizersgracht.

It was answered by a howl of triumph from the frantic and bloodstained woman within.

"Seven! Seven!" she screamed. "Seven heads! And they are all mine! all of them mine!"

The man fled for his life.

The sound of his flying steps came faintly—ceased altogether.

The storm had died, and suddenly the moon came out, shone down on the waters of the canal—turgid and troubled—on the dripping trees and the river of mud running along the Keizersgracht, looked in at the unshuttered windows of the cellar, and flooded it with light.

There lay a heap of headless bodies, with the blood streaming from their necks, and from a dozen gaping wounds, dealt by some weapon and with terrific force. Seven heads, all with wide-opened eyes, in which a vague presentiment of terror seemed dawning—all save one, and

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that was but half a head, smitten from its other half, which might be found clinging to the limp neck of a disfigured body.

This, too, the moon saw—a little, mad old woman, laughing, chattering, crying to herself, who stared about her with unseeing eyes when first the moon looked in, and then suddenly seeing all, gave way to frenzy, cast herself on the ground in the midst of the ghastly company, striking at and biting whatever she touched, shrieking with horrible laughter as the heads rolled about beneath her furious blows. And all this was so pitiful to see that after a little while the moon hid her face behind the clouds and the night was black until the grey fingers of the dawn lifted the curtain of the day.

The morning watch on the Keizersgracht was horrified to find the headless body of a man stretched before the door of one of the wealthiest residents, and while stooping to examine it a peal of hideous laughter rang in his ears.

Turning his face swiftly, a grinning, blood-stained face stared at him from the cellar window—the eyes were bright and cunning, the lips parted in an unmeaning smile over the toothless gums.

With a cry of alarm, the good officer put a safe distance between himself and a wrinkled, bloodstained paw that was stretched forth to seize him, and, with a growl of rage, the face at the window disappeared.

The guardian of the peace, greatly troubled and disturbed, was about to hurry to the town to seek assistance in unravelling the mystery, when a heavy travelling carriage rolled into view, and he recognised the equipage of the owner of the house.

He pointed to the corpse.

He waited its approach, and, when it stopped before the door, which covered this unknown tragedy, he advanced quickly to meet its occupant.

With a few words of explanation, he pointed out the corpse stretched before the house, and, at the same moment, attracted by the sound of the wheels, Anne's scarcely-recognisable face appeared at the cellar window.

At the sight of her master, who stared at her with an expression of mingled wonderment and horror, she gave a bitter, incoherent cry, and great tears forced themselves from her eyes, and, mingling with the blood which bespattered her face, formed two red and muddy rivulets, which ran heavily down the furrows of her cheeks.

"Anne! Great Heaven!" exclaimed the master.

Then, suddenly regaining his self control, he turned angrily to his servants, who had huddled behind him.

"What are you doing, standing there? Why do you not open the doors? Come, get out your keys."

But in spite of his firm and angry tones, he shuddered as his gaze fell on the ghastly corpse before his door, and the poor distorted face which looked out above it.

The officer, ashamed to betray hesitation, followed the owner into the house, and followed him to the cellar.

The sickening spectacle unnerved both men.

But when the poor, mad creature came creeping, like a faithful dog, over the bloodstained floor, past the mutilated bodies, to kneel at the feet of her beloved master, the pompous, self-contained old merchant broke into weeping and sobbed like a child.

It was many days before the lucid interval, which came just before the death of the old servant, permitted her to tell the whole terrible story.

In her fevered ravings she had betrayed her sufferings little by little, but towards the last the delirium left her, and at the close of one bright autumn day, when the rays of the setting sun lay across her bed, she opened her faded eyes, clear at last of the terrible hallucination which had possessed her mind ever since that awful night.

Her master was summoned and stood beside her with her faithful hands in his, while hurriedly, all-unconscious of her heroism, she told him at what a price she had saved that which he had intrusted to her care. The end came that night.

And so in grateful commemoration, on the grim stone façade of the house on the Keizersgracht were carved the seven heads of the men who were slain in self-defence, and, in the protection of another's property, by the hand of a single woman.

Yes! although one of them was the nephew of the owner of the house, and had many times been made welcome beneath its roof; he, too, with the rest, was copied in death, and perpetuated in stone to the memory of a faithful servant. And all Amsterdam knows the legend. A. S. V. W

KEEP YOUR EYE ON THE BOOKSTALLS

For next week's issue of *Short Stories*, which will contain the opening chapters of Mr. George C. Wallis' new serial, "The Last King of Atlantis." It is the translation of a parchment discovered in the bed of the Atlantic by submarine explorers, and deals with the life history of Arnon, by turn, pirate, priest, sailor, soldier, courtier, and king.

It is an excellent story in every way, and is well worth following up.

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THE TURN OF THE TIDE.

The short autumn day was closing in fast as a girl stood at the door of a private studio in one of the side streets off a main thoroughfare in London, watching the retreating figure of her shabbily clad model till nothing but the echo of the weary steps came back through the fading light.

As the last sound of them died away, a man strode rapidly up the street towards her.

"Come in; it's cold outside. I thought you might have been here before this," she said, with a fresh light in her face, as he stopped beside her.

In a few minutes they were sitting over their tea by a crackling fire.

"You are silent to-night—what are you thinking about so deeply?" said the man playfully, putting his hand under her chin to see the better into the face he knew so well.

"I was thinking of my model, she looked so thin and ill, and seemed so tired and forlorn. Do you know lately, since I have had *you*, I feel so sorry for everyone who is lonely or unhappy."

"Dear little girl," he answered fondly, "it is nice of you to feel like that, but we cannot make everyone happy, or, were it possible, I know you would do so."

"Would not you also?"

"Yes—yes, of course."

She sighed. "Well, if I cannot make everyone happy I hope at least I may never make anyone very unhappy. I don't think I ever have yet. Have you?"

"What nonsense you do talk, child. Why do you ask?"

"I don't know. Except that, much as I care for you, I sometimes see something in your face which warns me that you *could* be hard and even cruel. Remember, I know so little of you really, though we are to be married when success arrives. Oh, when will that be!"

There was a pause, during which his eyes, wandering over the various sketches pinned against the wall, were arrested first by one, then another of them.

In a minute she went on: "Perhaps it is an indiscreet question, but tell me, have you ever cared for anyone before, as you care for me, now?"

"Not as I care for you, dear," looking at her bright eyes, near his own.

"Am I really the only girl you have ever asked to marry you?" she persisted.

"No."

"Oh!" and she paused again. "You have been engaged before, then?"

"Yes."

"What became of her—did she die?" lowering her voice.

"I don't know. No. I never heard that she died. But don't let us talk of all that," he went on quickly, "it was over so long ago—before I knew you, or had even seen your dear face."

He was gazing with sudden interest at a sketch opposite where they were sitting, of water, and sky, and little else.

"What is that? Surely it is a new acquisition? Where did you get it?"

"Which? Oh, that. Did I never tell you—it is such a curious story. But, you see, when you are here everything else seems to go out of my head."

She fetched an old portfolio from a corner of the studio and then, pushing a footstool beside his chair, settled herself on her lowly seat, and began:

"That is the rough sketch from which that marvellous picture, 'The turn of the tide' (you remember it?), was painted, which was in the Academy some years ago. By-the-bye, did you notice what a long price it fetched the other day on being resold by its former owner? It was a wonderful piece of art."

"Yes, but how on earth did you get the rough sketch of it?"

"You remember I wasn't very well a short time ago, and went over the Border for change and rest? Well, by an odd chance, the place I pitched on was the very place where that picture was painted, and the cottage I took, the very one in which the lady lived who painted it."

"Lady! Impossible! It was too masterly a style to be a woman's."

"So I thought. But I know now who the lady was, and a good deal about her. I made friends with an old woman in the village, who, knowing me to be an artist, one day offered to sell for a few shillings this portfolio you see, which, she said, had belonged to a former tenant of the cottage I had taken, and who had been a great picture maker, as she called it, like myself. Taking my 'find' down to the beach I found a flat rock to sit on, and began my investigations. I confess at first I was a little disappointed at discovering nothing more than some rather crude sketches, though with a certain latent power in them, evidently the productions of a beginner, more or less, and all dated some ten years previously.

"I was just shutting it up when I espied a curiously-concealed flap, out of which I drew two objects. This,"

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holding up a thin manuscript book, "and, to my surprise, the sketch of the picture I remembered so well, and had admired so much—for was it not that day at the Academy which began *our* acquaintance?—and, suddenly, holding that drawing so, in my hand, I recognised the broad waters and sky stretching away before me as the original of the picture."

There was a short silence before, in a lower tone, she added:

"And then, with the gorgeous sunset flaming in my eyes, and the 'weird chuckle' of the gulls in my ears as they fought and chattered on the mud-flats below—for the tide was going out fast—I learnt something of the life that had been lived out in the lonely cottage before I came. It was always very quiet down there—only a few barefooted children sometimes paddled in the water after sundown, when the tide was out as it was then."

The shadows gradually deepened in the untidy studio as the girl began reading a few extracts from the manuscript book by the leaping firelight, the man's hand resting tenderly on her shoulder as she read:

"'March 26th, 1886.—Passing up from the little wayside station over the bit of common-land, no one would guess that just beyond the fringe of weather-beaten pines edging the land and half hiding the wide sheet of water, there nestles close under the cliff a little old cottage amid the straggle of trees, having its foothold on a projecting tongue of land. The trees hide it, and also hide from its inmates' view everything but that which lies directly in front of it which is, water at high-tide. water and mudflat at low tide, twice in the twenty-four hours, and the hills beyond that and the sky beyond and over all.

"'When the water comes weltering in it is as though the cottage were built on piles in its midst; the sea-mews, and gulls, and black scarts, float on its calm breast; the sun sinks in all its wonderful glory of colour over yonder hills and is reflected in ethereal beauty on its shining surface. And then, as the waters recede, leaving rivulets between the islets of mud, the gulls are there, again screaming and chattering and laughing in the weird and desolate way that only gulls can, in lonely places.

"'This is the spot to which I have drifted after the fever of life is spent. Here is peace. In my little cottage by the silent waters, I can pile up the wood on my own hearthstone, and the smoke, curling upwards, adds its brown to the colour of the rafters above, which have upheld the roof over generations who have come and gone; all with their manifold joys, and sorrows such as mine—but perhaps over none quite so lonely as I.

"'It is three years to-day since I left the old life and set up my household gods here. And in the early winter twilights, as I sit by my flickering firelight, they speak of the departed grandeur—gilded grandeur, which crumbled like dry-rot at the first breath of trouble; and now I am glad of this shelter, literally from the storms and winds of heaven, where I am beholden to no one, paying my way with honest coin of my own earning and not with money to which I have not the slightest right.

"'I wished, when I came here, to cut myself off completely from everyone I had known before, and have done so, except in my dreams and recollections. Their photographs are around me, but troubles and poverty have come between them and me. Sooner than linger on, despised and barely tolerated, I have preferred to be as one dead, with the struggle towards fame as my goal. Life could not well be lonelier, and yet it is not altogether unhappy. I am my own mistress at last, and there are no petty jars and frets. I can sit over my handful of fire and be warm. I have my piano and can play the dear old airs I love so well, in the quiet dusk of the summer evenings when the roses are nodding at the open windows, and the salt breeze floats in to mingle with my pot-pourri in the old china bowl beside me. My books and my sketches are around me. I am alone, but the ghosts of the past are always close at hand to keep me company.

"'Sometimes, the remembrance of *him* and the most bitter humiliation of my life comes to upset my content, though I try to persuade myself that a love which could not face even the reflection from disgrace for its beloved object, was of little worth, but yet I loved him so, and it was all I had, all I ever had in a life that has been so full of sorrow.

"'April 12th.—It is coming! I feel it, I know it. I shall make a great name, a new name, to redeem the old, which was disgraced through no fault of mine. To-day my picture, "The Turn of the Tide,"—was it not well-named?—has been accepted at the Academy. To me it will justify its name. Dear little cottage, how I love you, for you have brought me fame.

"'May 8th.—Yesterday I went up to town. My picture is well hung, and there was quite a crowd round it, an admiring crowd. *He* was there, talking to a young girl as once he talked to me, looking down into her eyes as once he looked into mine, but his eyes were even more tender than I remember them; and his mouth more cruel.

"'May 28th.—Fame is very sweet. I have had a more than generous offer for my picture, and more than generous criticisms in all the papers. *Can* I part with the former? Poverty is a stern master. I must. But my little rough sketch—never. I will hide it where no one will find it, so that I may not be tempted by any high price which might be offered, and when I am dead I hope it may fall into the hands of someone who has loved me and can understand the thoughts that were with me as it grew under my fingers.

"'The artist who is painting in this old-world place, was here to-day to congratulate me on my success. I often see him; he is the only friend I have here, or, indeed, anywhere else. It always rests me to be with him—he is so gentle and thoughtful when I have one of my restless, unhappy fits. I sometimes wonder if I am growing to depend too much upon his never-changing sympathy in all my moods. I shall miss him, I confess, when he flits south as he will do when the summer is over, which even here will not last for ever.

"'June 10th.—My artist has been here this evening, as in many past ones—I feel almost young again. He has asked me for that which I thought I had long ago given away completely and for ever to someone with beautiful eyes and masterful ways and a cruel mouth—my love.

"'But is it not preposterous of me to dream of such things? I have begged for two days in which to look into my own heart.

"'I have not been feeling well lately. It must be the result of the excitement of success coupled with the unusual heat we have had for so many weeks. I am so tired, too tired to think any more to night. Good-night, dear gulls, I need not be lonely much longer if I choose.

"'June 12th.—He has been and is gone. At last, at

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last I am happy! Is is not wonderful to be able to say that? I know that I love him, and I cannot doubt that he loves me, and we are to be married next month, and fight the world together.

"'I wish that the pain in my side hurt less. I have promised him to see a Dundee doctor to-morrow about it. But I shall be all right when the cool weather comes. I am happy, quite happy. How sweet the roses smell to-night, and the waters are asleep, and the moonbeams are playing on its untroubled breast I hear only a faint sigh from the trees upon the shore—even the gulls are asleep.

"'JUNE 13TH.—Can it be only twenty-four hours since I shut this book—only twice that the little rivers of water have run in between the cushions of mud impressed with the trident marks of the sea-birds feet? That is all that separates life from death.

"'I went to see the doctor and he told me, very kindly certainly, but inexorably, that he can do nothing for me. Had I gone to him some months ago it is possible he might have been able to prolong life, but that, as it is, he gives me one month! One month in which to live out my life and bid my good-byes, but that I am not to suffer much pain, not until quite the end—thank God for that.

"'I have thought it all over as I came home, and I shall make no visible change in my daily life, nor shall I say anything of this to him who was to have shared the life that is ebbing so fast. Nothing can be done; before the end, when the pain comes, I shall send him away on some pretext or other and on his return—where shall I be?

"'JULY 4TH.—*How* did I bid him good-bye? The evening has been divine. We sat on the flat stone facing the hills, down on the beach. Everything was very quiet, and we waited there till the sun sank, and the line of dim blue hills was all that divided the opal sky from the opal water; up from the streaks of green and yellow, blue and orange, rose the sepia rocks like a small archipelago of islands. The indescribable beauty of it all wrung my heart. Up behind, in the fir-wood, some youths and maidens were laughing and shouting. Their voices floated down to us on the rock below the bank. They sang a hymn together, and the notes seemed to rise and fade at last into that changing vault of colour above and to die away in the golden glow, at the very gates of heaven. Far, far away a tiny boat crept slowly along under the purple hills.

"'Ah, how the gulls cry! I look out of my little casement-window and see the flicker of their snowy wings glancing in the ghostly moonlight as it sleeps on the mud-flats and shines in the narrow streaks of water. The pain, the pain, how shall I bear it, alone——?'"

The firelight died down. The girl's voice faltered in the quiet studio.

"There it ends," she said, "I suppose she died soon after. There is only her name, not the one she was known by in the Academy catalogue, but I suppose, her real one—after those words."

"What is that?"

"Marian Dacre."

The man's eyes gleam, his hand shakes like a leaf as he hastily lifts it from the girl's bowed shoulder, his lips are pressed together tightly. But no word escapes him. Only, before he leaves, he says: "There is something in what you have read which takes my fancy—may I have it? I believe I could make something out of it as a story."

* * * * *

Before the summer is over, "The Turn of the Tide" has run through two editions, lifting its author—a man with tender eyes, and a cruel mouth—high and dry into the land of promise, whither he has taken his new-made artist wife, and together they are invited everywhere on the strength of his wonderful book.

VERNER FENTON.

POST-CARD COMPETITION No. 13.

On page 411 will be found two columns of figures. A guinea is offered to the reader who first forwards the correct total, and another guinea to the provincial reader who does likewise. In adding the figures together tot up each digit independently. For example, 12, 124, 79=26, NOT 215. Do not include figures other than those in the column—from 1 to 124. *Post-cards only please; and only one answer allowed on each.*

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KEY TO JUMBLED STORY NO. 10.]

THE EVENING BEFORE.

(OUTSIDE Maud's house, and rather dark. Harry approaching.)

Harry (in joyous soliloquy): "Eight o'clock! At this time to-morrow we'll have been married just seven hours and a quarter. Jove! Doesn't it seem queer—and, delicious. I want to see her once more—tell her how much I love her—hear her say how much she—uh! Eh! Confound you; take care where you are going!"

Indistinct figure (which has collided with Harry): "Beg pardon, sir, but I couldn't see. We're putting up an awning frame out here."

Second indistinct figure: "Hi, there; look out for your toes." (Drops heavy scantling almost on Harry's foot.)

Harry (somewhat discomposed): "This is jolly, I vow." (Rings.)

Servant (opening): "Well, you are here at last, are you? Oh, excuse me, Mr. Spooner. Thought it was the man with the——"

Voice (over banisters): "Has he come, James? Tell him——"

Servant: "It's Mr. Spooner, ma'am."

Voice: "Oh! It's only Mr. Spooner, Maud. What can have become of that man? Now, Maud——" (Voice recedes.)

Harry: "Hum!"

(Enter down the stairs, with a dove-like swoop and rustle, Maud, all smiles and happiness at seeing Harry.)

Maud: "Dear!"

Harry: "Oh, Maud."

Maud (staying Harry's impassioned rush): "No, not here, you reckless boy! Don't you notice that carpenter? He's fixing the——and, oh, my darling, I don't know where to take you, for, you see, the florist is at work in the parlour, and then——"

Harry (hopefully): "The music-room?"

Maud: "The presents are displayed there."

Harry: "The dining-room?"

Maud: "No; the caterer's men have possession of that, and the women from madam's are in the library and all my things are being packed upstairs, and——"

Harry (sarcastically): "Perhaps the kitchen——"

Maud (quite seriously): "It's a perfect pandemonium!"

Harry (same): "Or the stable?"

Maud (same): "Why, Patrick says he can't ever stow away—you're laughing at me, you wicked—but I'm simply wild to-night with all this bother—oh! papa's little studio! But it's a mass of confusion, for everything not immediately wanted is put there."

Harry (aside): "Just the place for me, then." (They enter.)

Maud: "Now, dear, we'll have a nice, delightful chat; for, as you know, we've only seen each other four times to-day, and I've so many things to tell you."

Seamstress (opening door): "If you please, Miss Maud, would you step upstairs? That back needs to be fitted again, and——"

Maud: "Oh, Harry, you can't think what trouble we've had with that dress. When it was sent home we found that—— Coming, mamma!" (Exit).

(Harry comtemplates ceiling with what patience he may for ten minutes, when re-enter Maud.)

Maud: "That's settled. Now, to begin again. It's so sweet——"

Maud's mamma (entering hurriedly): "Maud! Would you—oh, good evening, Mr. Spooner!—would you put all those light things into the tin box or the little sole-leather? I think perhaps we'd better——"

Maud: "Any way you like, mamma—I don't care." (Exit mamma.) "And, as I was saying, Harry——"

Bridesmaid (outside): "I'm awfully sorry to disturb you, Maudie, but won't you please come out here for an instant? I don't quite understand how I am to——" (Maud slips out, remaining some time, while Harry listens to the following):

Maud, The bridesmaid, the bell, and various voices: "There's two dozen, I think, of white silk—lilies for the arch over the door—ding! ding!—where's James?—in the bottom of some trunk, I'm sure—if those are roses, bring 'em here—and drive tacks through the dead centre of every one—ding! ding!—Mrs. Smith's compliments, and she sends—three cakes of toilet soap—so please pack the handkerchiefs in—a salad-bowl or soup tureen—for there aren't bags enough to—flavour the creams—and your Paris hat is put—in the ice-chest, where it ought to be—ding! ding!—you must see the floral bell; it's made of—one hundred chicken croquets, sprinkled with—Mr. and Mrs. Snyder's best wishes, mum—and set off by—four dozen dessert spoons—and the minister's fee—tied up in a brown-paper bag!"

Maud (re-entering): "Oh, Harry, isn't this awful?"

Harry: "Well, we'll be at peace now. Come, one little kiss——"

Maud (shrinking away): "Ow!"

Harry: "What is it? Oh!" (Before him stands a messenger-boy, silently holding forth letter.)

Harry (petulantly): "I know well enough what this is!" (Reads letter and tears it up.)

The messenger-boy: "Any answer, sir?

Harry: "No! Off with you. (Exit boy.) You see, Charley has never been best man before, and he's frightfully nervous about it. This is the fifth note to-day from him. He's asking whether he shall wear a white scarf or a pearl-grey one like mine! Let him wear both or neither or none at all, and be hanged to him!"

Maud (tearfully): "Oh, now you're getting cross—I shouldn't think you would—and I don't blame you, it's so exasperating! I've been going through it all day, and I'm just t-t-tired to—de-death——"

Harry (remorsefully): "Poor little girl! There! There! forget all about it, and we'll talk about something else. There! There!" (Brief bliss, broken by voices).

Voices: "Maud! Miss Maud! Maudie!"

Maud (springing up): "Oh, dear, it's no use! Just hear them!"

Harry (in despair): "Well, I'll go. But——"

Maud (tenderly): "But remember, dear, that I love you just as much as if I weren't so awfully busy—getting ready to prove it!"

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High Play.

A Comedy off the Stage.

By G. Manville Fenn.

CHAPTER XXIII.

A True Wife Speaks.

Another edition of the evening paper had come out, giving the correct news this time, and an apologetic editorial note after three asterisks, regretting the slip that had been made; but Olive had long before this known the real state of the case.

Lady Braetoun, the senior, was prostrate in bed at her son's house, wildly hysterical still, and under the care of her own special doctor, with Olive's maid to attend, for her daughter-in-law had shrunk from her in horror and shame that she could not define, so strange and confused were they in her agonised state. For it seemed to her that she herself was somehow in fault, and that the mother would feel a kind of hatred against her for her son's misdeeds.

There was a peculiarly hard, stony look in her eyes, and her face looked marble in its whiteness behind her thick veil, as she went silently down the stairs and entered the drawing-room, gazing at the heavy, bent figure in a chair, with its back to the window, elbows on knees, and face buried in his hands.

At last she glided more than walked to its side, drew a deep breath, and softly laid a hand upon the bowed down figure's head.

"Father!"

Emsworth started up as if suddenly awakened, and gazed at her wildly for a few moments before he could speak.

Then, as if grasping the meaning of her being dressed, he caught at her hands, as he cried huskily:

"Olive, my darling! Oh, my poor child!"

Then his hands dropped to his side, and he shivered in his misery and anguish, for she shrank from his touch.

"Yes; quite right," he said hastily. "You are ready to come away. This is no longer a home for you."

"Father!" she said, in a low, deep voice little above a whisper, as she fixed her eyes on his, and instinctively he winced again, and his eyes vacillated and fell before her stern judicial gaze, which seemed to read his every thought.

"Yes, yes," he said; "I have had a cab waiting. Let us go at once."

She did not seem to grasp his meaning, or to hear it, and she said in the same cold measured way:

"You must have known of all this and hidden it from me."

"My darling! The report was false, and as soon as I had heard the truth from Murray I came on to try and spare you the agony that I knew it must cause you."

"But you knew—all that Lady Braetoun told me in her misery and despair, while she thought that her son was dead."

"Olive, my child!"

"Don't speak to me—for a minute," she said, as she pressed her hands to her temples, "I cannot think. Something like a black cloud keeps coming over my brain."

"Yes, you are suffering terribly; but come—come with me—home, at once,"

"It has gone again," she said, with a piteous sigh, and as if speaking to herself. Then aloud, and in a low, sad tone, but full of bitter reproach: "You must have known—all this. Why did you leave me to find it out in this cruel way?"

"Olive, my own darling," he whispered imploringly, "I

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believed him to be a manly, upright fellow who had been, as so many are, a little wild. God help me that I should have to speak to my own child like this! How could I foresee that he would behave to you as he has?"

"But you have known of that for some time now?"

"Yes," he groaned, as he looked at her as if asking for mercy.

"Why did you not tell me? Why did you let me go on believing as I have believed till awakened from my dream as I have been to-day?"

"Olive, my darling, be merciful to me," groaned Emsworth. "How could I, as your father, come to you and strike such a blow at your faith and love as would make you hate me to the end?"

She stood gazing at him as if her brain was once more numbed, her power of thinking paralysed, and, trembling and ghastly-looking, the old man softly took her hand to raise it reverently to his lips.

That touch seemed to break the ice, and with a wild cry she threw her arms about his neck, to burst into a hysterical flood of tears.

"My own darling! My own little one!" he whispered as he drew her closer and closer to his breast. "Yes, cry—cry, the tears will relieve you. Don't—don't be angry with your poor old father, whose one thought these many years has been to make you happy, and always will be. You shall come home at once with me, and we will go right away and try to think of it all as a bad dream. Law—man and wife—curse all such laws! They shan't stand between us, my darling. Come, can you bear to rest on me again? It is your father, Olive. You can trust him, dear, even if he did hide the truth."

She made an effort to draw herself up, but flung herself upon his breast again and kissed him passionately.

"Where is he?" she said at last.

"Where is he?"

"Yes; take me there at once. I can bear it now. The black curtain seems to have gone."

"Take you—take you there?" said Emsworth, looking at her aghast.

"Yes. I ought to have gone before—directly, but I felt as if I had had some dreadful blow, father, which stunned me."

"Olive, my own darling!" he cried, "you must not—you shall not talk like this. I cannot bear it. You are everything to me—your mother and my child in one. But there, pray don't talk like that. Come, let us go at once."

"Yes, to him, dear," said Olive gently, and she returned his caresses. "They say it is a woman's lot to suffer, dear, and I am going to try and be strong. There, it is all past now. I do not blame you, dear. I have nothing to forgive."

"But, my darling, it is impossible. You cannot go to him now."

"Cannot go?" she cried, flushing slightly.

"No; he has forsaken you and chosen his path. You shall choose yours, and that is along with me."

She shook her head sadly.

"Let him have the place—everything. You shall take nothing away but your own self, the treasure he could not value, and that I shall claim once more as my very own."

"No, dear; no, dear," she whispered, as she nestled to him; "he is my husband."

"He has broken every tie."

"I swore to cleave to him, and, because he forgets his oaths, shall I forget mine?"

"You shall not be weak and foolish," cried Emsworth passionately.

"No, dear, I will be neither; but he, my husband, lies dangerously injured, and am I at such a time to forget the duties I owe him?"

"To such a man—yes."

"No, no, no, dear. I must go—I ought to have been there long ago. It is no time to think of his trespasses now. Come, take me to him quickly, dear."

"I cannot, I will not, Olive; it is madness."

"My heart says no, father. I tell you I must go."

"But do you not see, dear? How can you go there at such a time?"

"By my right to act, father, as his wife. Take me there at once."

It was no longer the gentle, yielding girl who spoke, but the firm woman, in whose eyes were reflected a will stronger than his own, and in place of angry opposition he feebly protested with a gesture.

"Come," she said, taking his hands, and without another word he suffered her to lead him down to the hall, a loud whispering coming through an open glass door, and telling that the servants were assembled below to discuss matters.

The next minute father and daughter were being driven towards Brompton Square.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Facing Temptation.

A pretty-looking maid, very smartly dressed, and whose eyes were red with weeping, opened the door, and stared at the strangers, who pressed forward to enter. Then, recovering herself:

"What is it?" she said. "Missis can't see visitors. The doctors are here, and someone's very ill. Can't see nobody."

"There, my dear," whispered Emsworth; "you hear. Come back. It is better so."

Olive did not seem to hear his words, but stepped forward, and the girl involuntarily gave place.

"Take me to the room where Lord Braetoun is," she said sternly.

Her manner mastered the girl, but she made another attempt.

"But, please, ma'am, there's two doctors with him, and missis said I was to let nobody in."

"Where is he?"

"In the drorin-room, ma'am."

Olive gently pressed her aside, and passed on to the little staircase, upon whose landing, beneath a stained glass window, a number of pots of gay flowers had been roughly thrust aside, and lay broken and crushed as they had been since Braetoun had been carried up from the fly in which he had been brought to the door, and as Olive mounted the stairs there was a quick rustling sound of silk, and, pale, haggard, and dishevelled, Lucy stood upon the landing to bar the way.

Face to face again, Olive with the light from the stained glass window glorifying her pale features, Lucy now in shadow, and for some moments they stood gazing wildly at each other.

Lucy was the first to break the silence by drawing a long, deep gasping breath, and speaking desperately now in her effort to be firm.

"What do you want?"

"Where is Lord Braetoun?" said Olive coldly, and she took another step upward.

"Ill, very ill—with the doctors," panted Lucy. "You must go. No one can see him now."

"Stand aside, please."

"No, no," cried Lucy passionately. "The doctors will not even let me go in."

"Let me pass," said Olive sternly, and she pressed forward till they nearly touched.

"I will not," cried Lucy in an angry whisper. "It would kill him. You cannot—you shall not go."

Olive spoke in a stern, low, unmoved tone of voice, as cold and unimpassioned as her manner was irresistible.

"I must see him—I am his wife."

"Yes," whispered Lucy, as she stood her ground, "and you cannot love him, or you would not risk his life at a time like this. You shall not go."

For answer Olive stepped forward on to the landing, and, in spite of herself, Lucy gave way with a shiver of dread.

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But, as Olive ascended the second flight, the girl recovered herself, and bounded up after her visitor, caught her by the dress, darted by, and faced round again at the door, across which she stretched her arms.

"This is my house," she cried. "This is infamous. You shall not go in. It will kill him, I tell you. Stand back."

At that moment the door was softly drawn inward, Murray appeared, and as he closed it after him Lucy was fain to give way.

"You here, Lady Braetoun?" said Murray, with a look of pity and surprise.

"Yes. My husband—tell me."

Murray made no reply, and a passionate sob came from Lucy's lips.

"You have killed him—you have killed him!" she wailed.

"Hush! There must be no noise or excitement here," said Murray sternly. Then, with his voice full of the emotion he felt: "Lady Braetoun, this is no place for you."

She darted an angry glance at him.

"Take me to my husband, Doctor Murray," she said haughtily.

"It is impossible now," he said, recovering himself.

"Impossible? I must—I will see," cried Olive, in an angry whisper. "You are in league against me."

He raised his brows a little, and then, speaking more sternly:

"A doctor has but one thought, madam—to save his patient's life. My colleague and I are fighting to do this, and any interruption may prove fatal. No one can see Lord Braetoun now. Will you be good enough to retire?"

"No. It is impossible," she whispered. "Doctor, pray, pray don't you turn against me. You know all."

"Yes," he said, in the same low tone, and his voice was full of pity for the suffering woman by him, for every word sent a pang of misery to his heart. "Yes, I know all, but believe me, I am right. No one," he said, with emphasis, "can see him now, but I promise that you only shall be taken to his side."

She caught his hand in hers and kissed it.

"Now pray be advised by me, and leave this place. You are so short a distance from here, and I will communicate every change to you."

"I believe you," she said earnestly; "but I cannot leave here now. My duty is to stay."

"But I have told you that no one but the surgeon and a nurse can be in the room. Now I must return—pray, pray leave here at once."

"Yes. Go back to him now," said Olive, as she held firmly by the balusters.

"And you will go?" he whispered anxiously.

"No," she said firmly. "No: I shall stay. My place is here."

Murray made a sign to Emsworth at the bottom of the stairs, and he came up and stood on the landing close to where Lucy was leaning against the wall, one hand on the paper, the other crushing a bunch of lilies pressed in the corner half behind a curtain.

"You have heard what has been said, Mr. Emsworth?" he said, in a quick, irritable manner.

"Yes, every word."

"Kindly exercise your influence with Lady Braetoun, and ask her to return home."

"Hush! Do not speak to me," she said, turning her face to the door, and gazing at the beflowered panels as if she would pierce them through.

"It is of no use, Murray," whispered Emsworth; "I can do nothing."

"You must have been mad to bring her," said the Doctor angrily.

"Bring her, man! She brought me."

"But I cannot leave her in this situation. For Heaven's sake get her away."

"Tell me how," said Emsworth bitterly, and he turned to look at Lucy, as if there might be some solution of the difficulty.

At that moment the door was softly opened, and the white cap of the nurse appeared.

"Doctor," she whispered; "come, please, quick!"

Murray hurried in, and as he was closing the door a low, deep groan fell upon the listeners' ears; and as Olive sank upon her knees with clasped hands and laid her head against the panel, Lucy uttered a low, sobbing cry and turned her face to the hall.

Emsworth looked from one to the other, and then, after listening for a few moments to the creaking sounds he heard, as if the two attendants were changing the position of their patient, he laid his hand upon Lucy's shoulder, and then placed his arm about her little waist, for she was evidently on the point of fainting.

"Let me help you downstairs," he whispered.

She turned upon him resentfully, then with a low moan sank helpless upon his arm, and he bore her down to the passage, where the maid was waiting.

"Fainting," said the old man abruptly, "where am I to lay her down?"

The maid opened the door of the little dining-room, and as Emsworth bore her in a piteous voice from a lounge said softly:

"That you, my dear? Oh, how long you've been!"

"Please 'm, it's missis, and she's fainting.—Lay her on the sofy, sir, and I'll fetch some water,"

"Oh, dear; oh, dear," came in a groan; "my poor darling, and me not able to help her! Is that the doctor? My arm's as if it was red hot."

Emsworth was busy arranging his senseless little burden on the couch, and hardly heard the words, while the next minute the little maid was back with a glass of water.

"You please go now, sir. I'll soon bring her to, I'm used to faints."

Emsworth obeyed without a word, and the door was closed after him as he went softly up to the landing, where he could bend over Olive where she knelt.

A good ten minutes elapsed before the silence was broken again, and this time by the re-opening of the drawing-room door, and Murray stepped out, Olive now shrinking away, and holding up her hands to him as if in prayer.

"Much calmer now," he said in answer to her appealing look. "Now, Lady Braetoun, pray be advised. Go back with your father, and wait patiently for the news that I will send you every hour."

"Are you going to stay with him?" she said quickly.

"Yes; I will not go away."

"Ah!" she sighed, and there was again silence, and her father took her hand.

"You heard what Murray said, my dear," he whispered. "Come, be a brave, little woman. You can do no good, you see, so let's go back."

"Father, dear," she said imploringly, "I am suffering; don't, please, make it worse. I have told you. My place is here. Do you think I will give it up to another now?"

"I wouldn't say a word, my own, but it is impossible for you to stay."

"In some people's eyes," she said, with a pitiful smile. "I am going to prove that it is possible, for I will not stir from here till I am allowed to go to Roderick's side. My husband, father."

"Ah—h—h!" cried Emsworth between his teeth.

"It is his time of greatest need. It would be too horrible to leave him now."

Emsworth looked helplessly at Murray, and he bowed his head.

"Everything must give way to my patient," he said. "Take possession of the place and see that your child has proper attention."

This to the father. He turned then to Olive.

"One word," he said gently. "For your father's sake—for yours—I give up everything, and if Braetoun's life can

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be saved it shall be done; but there must be no excitement, no such encounter as that we have had."

Once more she caught his hand and hysterically held it to her lips long enough to send a thrill of mingled agony and pleasure through every fibre of the strong man's frame.

"I will obey you like a child," she said in a trembling voice, "but I must, I will, maintain my place here. Promise me that you will bring me to his side as soon as he can bear it."

She waited, but it was some moments before he answered, and she looked up wonderingly in the grave eyes so full of love, reverence, and pity; but she could not read the first, as he said softly:

"I promise you," and he hurriedly turned and once more entered the room to find his colleague bending over the prostrate patient, the nurse passing out to fetch something needed.

"I wanted you back," he said in a low whisper after an uneasy glance at the door. "You had better speak low, or they will hear, as I could hear nearly every word. Sad case. I pity the poor wife; but she will soon get her divorce."

He gave Murray a meaning look, and a spasm made the listener's face contract. It was instantaneous, and he was listening to the surgeon once again.

"I am going to ask you to spare me for two or three hours, or, if you can give up the time, till the morning, for I have three important accident patients whom I must see. Shall we leave it like this—that if you want me I will come at once?"

"Yes, I will send for you."

"Thanks. I have no one I can ask, or would ask, to go to my people, and it is not just to them to stay for this case. You are, of course, an old friend?"

"From boyhood."

"Ah, yes," said the surgeon, looking down at the motionless form stretched out upon the mattress. "It is a pity—young, of so good a position, with such prospects. But, there, I am not going to moralise; the world is the world, after all. I'm his surgeon, not his judge."

"Then you think——" began Murray, looking at him searchingly.

"Think, my dear sir?" said the surgeon, with a shrug. "Yes; don't you?"

Murray let his eyes fall to the pale, bandaged face, and made no reply.

"You see, as I said before, if he were some robust young fellow, with a constitution, we could have another operation and give him a chance; but anything more than we have done would be fatal, eh?"

"Yes, fatal," said Murray, "at once."

"Yes, at once. There, I will go. I'll come directly, then, if you want me; but a few hours, I suppose——"

They stood gazing in each other's eyes for a few moments, and then Murray was left alone, gazing down at his old companion, who was breathing feebly, his eyelids slightly apart, and cheeks and temples already assuming a terribly hollow look.

And as he gazed, he mused upon what had taken place. The surgeon's words, cynically brutal as they sounded, rang in his ears: "She will soon get her divorce." How soon? In a few hours; and then she would be free!

He went down on one knee, and with the delicate touch of the experienced practitioner, softly raised the eyelid and gazed into the eyes in turn.

A matter of a few hours and then the bright, clever man, the brilliant fellow-scholar of their old days, would be motionless for ever, and Olive freed from the trammels of her unhappy marriage. Free—and then?

He suffered an agony in those brief minutes, for the old temptation came back. It was as if his evil spirit were sneeringly asking how he could be such an idiot as to trouble himself about this worthless being. He had done a physician's duty by him, and prolonged his wretched life, as it was, for years, even to his own misery and despair; while now it was pretty well all over, the case was hopeless, his colleague gave him up, and he must die.

Murray rested on one knee, gazing down at the pallid, shrunken face, changed so rapidly since he was stricken, and self gave way to a higher feeling—the clever student of Nature's mysteries asserted itself, and Roderick Braetoun as he lay there was no longer the man who had caused him an agony of despair—no longer him whom he had, as it were, led to Olive Emsworth's feet, but the suffering patient, one whom it had been the study of his life to try and save from ill. This surgeon had spoken truly when he said that he was weak, and justified in looking upon the case as hopeless; but he was a stranger to the sufferer; he had not studied Braetoun's constitution, and treated him again and again. Why should not he, Allan Murray, with the knowledge that he grasped, make a great, a daring effort, and bring him, as it were, back to life, if not health. It would be almost a miracle, but science was achieving miracles now—at least, such triumphs as the people of a hundred years ago would have looked upon as marvellous.

"I might, perhaps, I might," he muttered; and he softly placed his hand upon the sufferer's breast, and then started and turned sharply, for he had been too intent to notice the quiet opening of the door, and had felt a consciousness of being overlooked.

It was so, for the nurse was standing there watching him.

"Go down and wait," he said in a husky whisper; "I will ring when I want you."

The woman looked at him strangely, but turned and left the room without a word.

Then like a cold chill came the thought of what he was going to do, from his own personal point of view—strive to save the life of his greatest enemy.

Something whispered to him that it would be madness. If he let Braetoun quietly pass away, a year hence matters might be so changed; Olive might be looking smilingly in his eyes, and he would be knowing true happiness in the love of one of the sweetest women who ever breathed.

The temptation was horrible. He felt that he must succumb.

(To be continued.)

Rudyard Kipling's new serial, for which he is being paid more than a shilling a word, starts in the Christmas Number of Pearson's Magazine.

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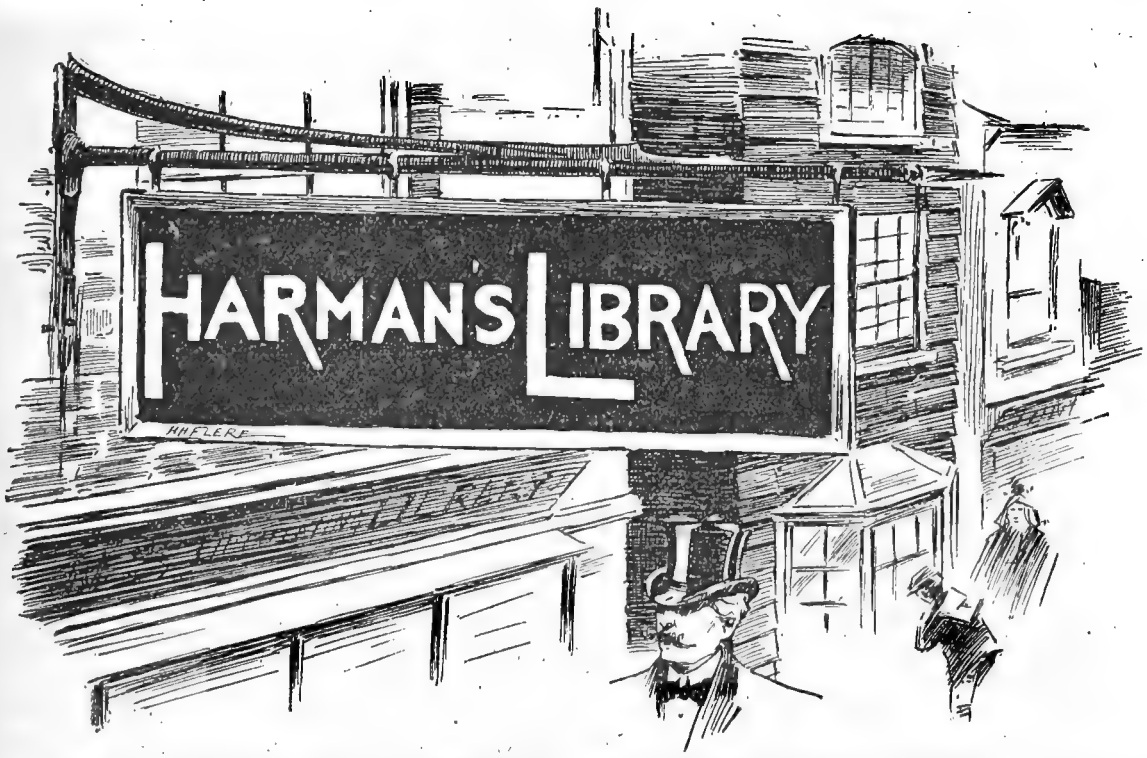

"Harman's Circulating Library" was the way the sign read under the little window.

Properly speaking, it should have been "Miss Harman's Circulating Library," but the lady considered anything feminine unbusinesslike, and so she eliminated the "Miss."

The library was kept in a small shop with one window. The window was large for the size of the room, letting in plenty of light, and so making the place cheerful.

The walls were lined with shelves, and on them stood the books, each volume neatly covered with brown paper, and its name boldly printed with a stub pen on the back.

Down the middle of the shop was a counter on which rested a glass case containing stationery and religious photographs.

Although the library was composed of little besides novels, old and new, good and bad, Miss Harman was a very devout woman. She did not at all approve of novels in such excess, but then, as she very truthfully remarked, without them the library would never "circulate."

There was a room at the back of the library where Miss Harman supplied herself with the necessaries of life, and a room over it where she slept.

She looked upon her surroundings with much pride and satisfaction, and was quietly happy in her own way.

Happiness, after all, is a very relative matter. Miss Harman had struggled bravely through deep waters and found great bliss in being quiet.

She had been educated for a public school teacher, had taken a position in a primary school, met a Dr. Richard Rand at the house where she boarded, and fell in love with him. It is but just to say that Dr. Rand had first fallen in love with her, for Miss Harman was by no means devoid of attractions. Even to the casual observer she was pleasing, with a strong, earnest face, pretty eyes and soft brown hair that rolled back from her forehead in a kind of curl.

Dr. Rand was a young physician, with an extremely limited practice and unbounded energy. His patients were all among the poor, many of them he treated out of charity, and matrimony seemed a long way off.

Then came a dreadful time of sickness among his people, in their crowded streets and houses. A terrible, loathsome disease that all fled from. The young doctor worked like a hero, and died like one. His patience, and courage and kindness will never be written of; his deeds of charity are forgotten, no doubt by those who benefited most; for man at best is an ungrateful animal.

Only one faithful heart worships his memory.

When he was stricken down Miss Harman went to him. She was alone, and he was alone. She had no fear of idle tongues, so she stayed by her hero. She had the comfort of his last words, she followed him to his grave, and then, after she had cried until there were no more tears to shed, she sat down and tried to think what she should do for a living.

She felt herself totally incapable of going back to the public school; she wanted something that would give her more time to herself.

After many trials and disappointments she got the position of companion to an old lady, who was a little deaf and nearly blind. Miss Harman used to look at her and wonder if she too would grow to be as helpless and lonely—only too poor to have a companion. The idea of marriage never occurred to her. She felt that such a thing had become impossible for her from the moment she had stood, a silent figure in black, that bleak March day, by the open grave, and listened to the

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sharp, quick rattle of the earth, as it fell upon his coffin.

She believed in all sincerity that her heart was dead and buried.

The old lady in time became warmly attached to Miss Harman, and, dying, left her a little legacy as a token of friendship.

The legacy was not enough to live on, though it was

"Ain't a boy," said the mite.

a great help. Then it was that she opened her circulating library.

It was not in a fashionable part of the town, but mostly surrounded by lodging-houses and small shops. The lodging-houses were filled with students from the university, whose ambitions were great and incomes meagre; the shops carried on every variety of retail trade.

Miss Harman was thirty-five now, and the soft brown hair was showing streaks of grey, which made her look much older. Her eyes, though still her point of beauty, had lost their brightness, sorrow and tears had dimmed them.

Thirty-five! When you think of it, that is comparatively young, even for a woman. Thirty-five and in perfect health; possibly thirty-five more years before her, and no one to live for but herself.

To be sure, she interested herself in the people about her, and was often helpful in time of trouble; but at the best this was only an outside interest. She wanted someone to love who belonged to her. Finally, Fate, who is not always so kind, interposed and gave her what her heart hungered for.

Directly opposite the library was a lodging-house, and in its first floor front lived a Professor from the university.

He was the ideal Professor—completely absorbed in his studies and entirely neglectful of all that pertained to the ordinary affairs and the business of life.

He was always alone; being of an extremely shy and reserved disposition, he had never got further, in a social way, with any member of the university than "Good-morning."

Any other man would have been miserable. Fancy not having a single person who knew you well enough to call you by your first name! The Professor's name was Richard—Richard Blair—and it must have been a long time since anyone had called him "Dick."

One afternoon in May the Professor came slowly home from the university. Usually he was a rapid walker, but to-day there was something in the spring sunshine that made him loiter and carried his thoughts away to green pastures and babbling brooks and shady woods.

The memory of certain days in the country, long ago, came back to him—of blue eyes and bonny brown hair, and a gracious presence, making the world a glorious place to live in.

From force of habit he stopped at the right house and mounted the steps. At the top he was brought from dreams to reality by a small figure that suddenly rose up before him. A tiny bit of humanity that stood, directly in his pathway, weeping bitterly. It had been many years since the Professor spoke to a child, and he was doubtful how to begin.

Just as the silence was becoming embarrassing he thought of a formula he had heard used with effect on such occasions and began hesitatingly: "Don't cry, little boy," and as an afterthought: "Run home to mother."

"Ain't a boy," said the mite with a sob. "Mamma's gone."

This information left him helpless, as he had exhausted his suggestions, so giving the child a penny, he went in.

But he was not to get off so easily, for she followed him; and when he turned, after entering his room, he saw her standing in the doorway.

"Run home, little girl," he said, beginning to feel annoyed, "your mother will want you."

"Mamma's gone," she repeated, and then walking up to him she laid her rosy little cheek, all streaked with tears and dirt, against his hand.

"Pet me," she commanded.

The Professor's intercourse with children was extremely limited, and "petting" them an art unknown. He lifted her up in his arms, however, and that seemed to answer, for she at once laid her golden curls upon his shoulder, and sighed with satisfaction.

"Now sing," she said.

Then it was the Professor realised the seriousness of the situation. He rang for his landlady, and told her how he found the child.

"Yes," she said, she knew her. "She was an orphan, poor baby—her mother had just died. She was going to be put in the 'asylum.'"

The woman came forward to take her, but the child threw both her arms round his neck.

"No, no," she sobbed. "Mamma's gone. I like you. Stay here. Shall stay."

There was no doubt about the clearness and conciseness of her remarks.

The woman stood waiting—of course the child must go—but the tiny arms clung warm and tight. The Professor hesitated, and "he who hesitates is lost."

"Let her stay," he said, "for the evening."

He ordered supper to be brought to his study; he stirred the fire, and put on fresh coal, for the evenings were still chilly, and then he drew up his easy chair, and

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the mite climbed upon his knee as naturally as if she had been doing it all her life.

After looking at him gravely for a few minutes she began abruptly: "My name's Jo. What's yours?" His eyes wandered over the golden head and into the fire beyond, where they rested.

"Dick," he said, half lost in reverie.

"Dick," she repeated, "Dick, I like you."

Soft, warm, lingering lips were pressed against his cheeks, and a responsive thrill shot through the Professor's heart. In an instant he saw his lonely life spreading out before and behind him, and with a sudden longing for love he folded his arms about the child who nestled close to him. From that moment till the end of their lives nothing ever came between them.

He paid Mrs. Toots, the landlady, for taking care of her, and when he was at home she always stayed in his rooms.

Her name was Josephine Burt—but everyone called her "Jo" for short.

She was a quiet child; giving the Professor very little trouble, and always content of evenings in his study, looking at the pictures he gave her, or talking to her doll. Having generally been in perpetual motion since early morning, by eight o'clock she would be sound asleep in one of his big chairs. Then Mrs. Toots would carry her off to bed, and it was entirely by accident if the Professor saw her again until the next afternoon.

It was during one of the many mornings, when Jo was left to her own resources, that she just made the acquaintance of Miss Harman.

The black cat brought about the introduction in a perfectly natural and informal manner. Jo saw the cat in the street and was so delighted with it that she immediately determined to have it for her own.

The cat evidently read her thoughts, and did not approve of them, for, as she advanced, he retreated until, the shop door being open, he was safe under Miss Harman's skirts.

With only her head visible above the counter, and the light shining through her dishevelled golden curls, Jo presented quite an angelic appearance. She looked to Miss Harman like a cherub's head on a Christmas card.

She speedily made known her earthly tendencies, however, with her usual abrupt conciseness, and explained to Miss Harman: "Jo want black cat."

"Jo want black cat."

It never occurred to Miss Harman to deny such an autocratic demand, and the cat, who was evidently a fatalist, yielded without cry or scratch.

Jo now looked about for some place where she could comfortably enjoy her new-found treasure, and, coming round the counter, spied the old sofa.

It was Monday morning, and Miss Harman was very busy. All the books taken out on Saturday night, for Sunday's reading, were being brought in; so Jo remained undisturbed, as no one ever troubled about her till it was time for the Professor to come home.

About midday she demanded her dinner, and they ate it in the room at the back of the shop, with the black cat seated gravely on a chair between them. Of course, Miss Harman knew who Jo was, but she wanted to hear her talk, so by way of starting the conversation she asked: "Who's little girl are you?"

"Dick's."

"Who is Dick?"

"Dick?" looking surprised and puzzled. "Oh! Dick is Dick."

Then seeking information in her turn: "Wha' 'ou cat name?"

"Dick," said Miss Harman, smiling.

Jo's eyes opened wide. "After my Dick?" she asked.

"Oh, no!" said Miss Harman hastily. "Another one."

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The idea of another Dick in the world was too much for Jo to take in all at once, and she fell into deep thought on the subject. Silent pondering, when one's years are between four and five, is dull work, and presently Jo closed her eyes, and sailed away to the "Land of Nod."

Miss Harman carried her to the sofa, laid a shawl over her, and pushed up a chair to keep her from rolling off. Then, after a moment's hesitation, she carefully cut from its mates a tiny curl, and laid it away—in memory of one of her vanished dreams.

About six the Professor came back from the university—he had stayed late to do extra work—and asked for Jo. Then it appeared she was nowhere to be found, and had not been seen since the morning. For a moment his heart stood still with fear at the thought of losing his darling—his little girl.

He started out to ask for her among the neighbours, and the first place he went to was Miss Harman's, because it was the nearest.

She had been watching for him all the afternoon, and when she saw him coming, opened the door for him.

"Jo is here," she said, "she has been with me all day. Won't you come in, Professor?"

It was the first time they had ever spoken, and the Professor entered rather diffidently. Then from his superior height he caught sight of Jo asleep on the sofa with the cat beside her.

"Ah!" he said, with a sigh of relief, "there she is. I am much indebted to you for taking care of her, Miss Harman; I feared for a moment I had lost my little girl."

He lifted her up tenderly, wrapping the shawl about her with true manly indifference as to whose it might be.

Jo was awake in a moment.

"It's Dick," she said, with sleepy surprise, then, her mind going back to the early problem—"Dick, the black cat's Dick, too, and she says it's named after you." Instantly she was asleep again, but her revelation considerably embarrassed the Professor. Miss Harman came to his aid with the suggestion that Jo had been dreaming.

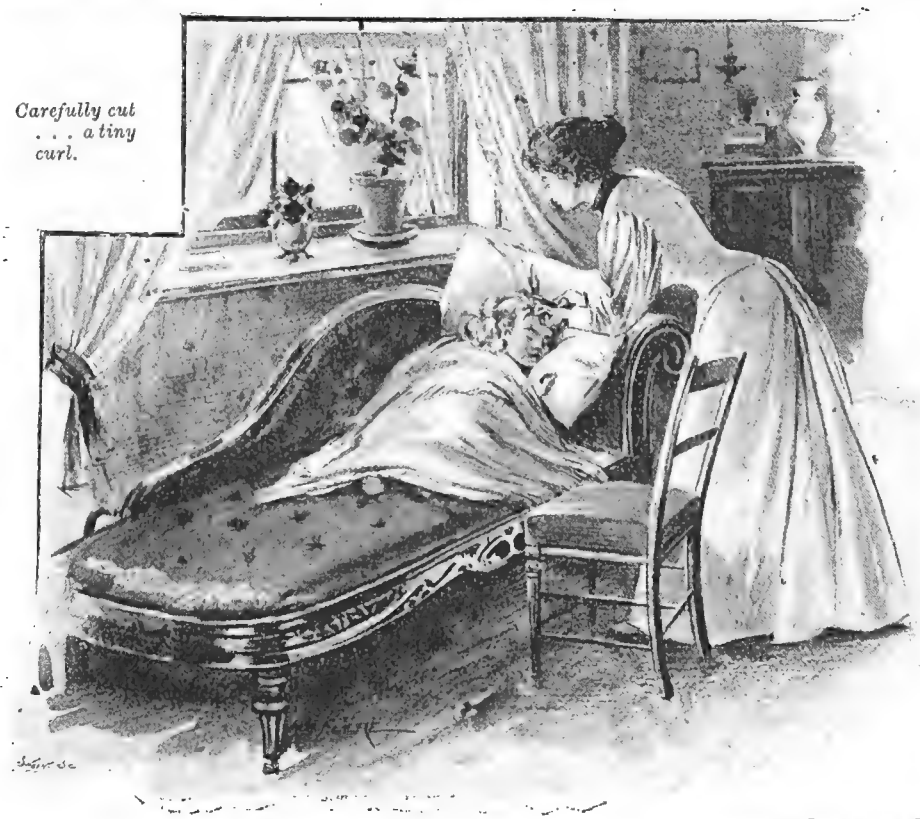
From that day a warm friendship sprang up between Miss Harman and Jo. The child had come into her life at one of the times when she was feeling her loneliness most keenly, and her whole heart warmed to her.

Every day Jo came to her. At first she only stayed to play, but as the weeks went by, her visits grew longer and longer, and Miss Harman fell into the way of sewing up rent garments and supplying missing buttons.

The summer drifted by, and everyone who had means or opportunity left town. Even a number of Miss Harman's customers vanished to "green fields and pastures new," probably to visit country cousins.

The Professor spent his vacation in reading and taking Jo for short excursions into the country. On several of these occasions Jo imperatively demanded that Miss Harman be taken also; but when invited that lady always pleaded attention to business as an excuse—much to the Professor's secret relief.

Jo, however, was a young person of great perseverance, and, having once made up her mind to a thing, was determined to accomplish it. By careful observation she discovered there was one day in the week upon which everyone seemed to be at leisure, Miss Harman among the rest. This day was called Sunday, and when it next came round Miss Harman was duly invited to go a-pleasuring with them.



Carefully cut . . . a tiny curl.

She had seen nothing now for weeks but dusty streets and glaring hot brick pavements. She longed to walk on green grass, under the shade of the trees in pleasant company, and so she went.

That was the beginning, and many other pleasant days came after. They were surprised to find how much they had in common.

As the autumn came on, the Professor got in the way of dropping into the library to take his little girl home, and often stayed to talk.

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One day Miss Harman gained courage to ask him to let Jo live with her.

"You will see just as much of her," she said; "she will be safer with me, and I am very lonely."

"I, too, am lonely," said the Professor with a sigh, "but Jo has brought me many pleasant hours. I shall be very glad to have her live with you."

Thus it was that Fate was kind to Miss Harman and gave interest to her life. From that time on she lived only for Jo—and that young person—such is the way of life—always cared most for the Professor. He had comforted her in her first real sorrow, and his place in her heart was before anyone else; not even a lover, when she had one, being able to usurp it.

When Jo was about six she was taken ill with a fever. For nights the Professor paced his study floor, anxiously watching the window opposite, where Miss Harman sat by his little girl.

In time the child got better, owing to careful nursing, and was much the same as ever; but during those nights of restless watching a great change had come over the Professor. He had looked into his heart and found there a love of much depth and strength and tenderness for Jo's other guardian.

He raised her hand to his lips.

It took him by surprise, and he was rather inclined to struggle against it, but he soon recognised that she had become too much a part of his life to be lightly dealt with.

Now that Jo was convalescent, the Professor would go over to read to her in the evening. They made a very homelike picture in the little back room. Miss Harman on one side of the fireplace sewing, the Professor on the other, with Jo on his lap, and the table with a lamp between them.

One night, after Jo had yielded to the soothing influence of fairy tales and fallen asleep, the Professor laid her gently on the sofa, and coming back to Miss Harman, asked her to listen to him.

He told her of his youth, of struggling ambition and poverty, of a romantic dream of love, such as young men dream, that he had of necessity been obliged to put away from him. Of how his ambition had, in a measure, been gratified, and that now for years he had been well enough off in worldly goods, but the one thing to glorify life and to make it beautiful to live was denied him.

"There is yet a hope," he said, "that this great good may come to me, and I am asking for it now. It is your love."

Miss Harman looked at his kind, earnest face for a moment in silence, and then she gave him her hand.

"Professor Blair," she said, and she spoke softly, for her voice was full of tears, "it is useless to hope. What you ask can never be." For between her and the man before her rose another face, and she knew that too much of herself was buried in the past ever to be resurrected.

He raised her hand to his lips with old-time courtesy. "It was presumptuous of me," he said, "to expect it. Forget, if possible, all that I have said to-night and for Jo's sake, as well as mine, let our friendly relations be undisturbed."

The Professor went away for a week on business, so he said, and when he came back his life went on as if nothing had happened.

Sometimes, perhaps, Miss Harman wished things could have been different. So they lived on, side by side, each working for Jo, who went back and forth, making a link of sunshine between them.

MADELEINE BRIDGES.

Just the Book for Bicyclists!

"ON THE DOWN GRADE,"

BY MISS WINIFRED GRAHAM, *Author of "When the Birds Begin to Sing," and other popular stories.*

PRICE ONE SHILLING.

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THE REWARD OF COURAGE.

Acidalie, who was a woodcutter's daughter, had of course heard that happiness exists; but she did not in the least know where she should find it. It certainly would not be in the paths of the wild wood, where she often journeyed in company with her father, her shoulders bowed beneath the weight of faggots of thorn, her bare feet among the briars and stones. Neither did she know what it was nor what it looked like, although a secret instinct counselled her to believe that it had the appearance and manners of a good-looking young man, with a proud glance, clad like the son of a prince in blue or rose-coloured satin, brocaded with silver or gold.

"What!" said she to herself one summer morning, as she sat by the side of a road in the forest, "am I fated never to know happiness? And yet I was sixteen last month. If it delays much longer it will have nothing to do with me, for I shall be an old maid."

She grieved so bitterly that the pebbles in the pathway were touched, which is a rare occurrence; for pebbles, as a rule, are not very tender-hearted. They are the rather inclined to be ill-humoured, because they are always being trampled upon without having the power to complain. And little Acidalie did not cease to grieve.

Luckily for her, not far off, there was a good fairy presiding over the wedding of a glow-worm and a fire-fly. As soon as the ceremony was ended she turned to the woodcutter's daughter, and said:

"Come, little one, do not be in such despair. Happiness is never so near as when you think it is far away. Only look across the road. Do you see that young hunter, asleep, with a smile on his lips, under a great, blooming rosebush? He is the king's nephew! Although he has never seen you, he is thinking of you in his dream. Cross the road, go quickly, and sit down beside him. As soon as he wakes he will put his arm around your neck and he will take you away to his palace, where you will be the happiest of princesses." At this the good fairy disappeared.

As for Acidalie she did not stir at first, she was so delighted. Never, never would she have believed that there could exist on earth anything as lovely as the young hunter sleeping under the blossoming branches. At the thought of having him kiss her and take her away with him, she was ready to faint with joy. But she lost but little time over these agreeable ideas, and, tucking up her home-spun skirt in order to run the faster, she started towards the happiness that awaited her on the other side of the road.

Alas! in this forest there were not only good fairies, but also bad ones. It was something like life, in which evil is side by side with good. So a bad fairy, who was presiding over the divorce of a couple of butterflies, turned to the little girl and stopped her with an imperious gesture.

"You must not hope," she said, looking very disagreeable, "that things will turn out like that. What! Attain happiness by only taking a few steps? That would be, indeed, new and curious! Why in that case there would be nothing more delightful than the fate of men or women! I have no idea of such a thing happening. As for you, little one, know that you are not at the end of your troubles. Neither to-day nor to-morrow will you be the happiest of princesses in the palace of the king's nephew."

"Oh! madam, are you as malicious as all that? What displeasure can the satisfaction of a poor girl like me cause you? Anyhow, I have nothing to fear from you. As the good fairy told me to cross the road, no power can prevent me from doing so."

"It is true that one fairy cannot go against the will of another," retorted the fairy, "but she who protects you omitted, in the haste of her kindness, to specify the manner in which you should pass to the other side of the pathway. Go, hurry, run if you can; but look! high up in the air there is a thread of gossamer, trembling light, almost invisible, which stretches from an oak to an elm. Upon this you must walk to get across the road." And when she had thus expressed herself the bad fairy disappeared, not without a chuckle which frightened all the birds in the forest. Even the trillings of a black-headed linnet were suddenly hushed, as the babble of a spring might be silenced by one frozen drop of water.

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At first Acidalie was unwilling to believe in her misfortune. She started again. Vain attempt. A mysterious power kept her on her own side of the road. It was impossible for her to take a single step forward; she could not even stretch out her arms to the happiness that was smiling in its sleep, so close to her, under the rosebush. Then she burst into tears. What! could it be possible? Was it really true? She would not be seated at the hunter's side when he should awaken, a moment later? He would not take her away, to make her his wife, in the king's magnificent palace?

She raised her tear-wet eyes to the thread of gossamer which stretched from the top of the oak to the highest branch of the elm. Alas! it was so fine, so delicate, ever ready to fly away in the breeze. A wren could have severed it with one stroke of its wing; it would have been a very tiny butterfly that could have alighted on it without breaking it. If Acidalie, having climbed the tree, should risk barely the tips of her toes on this quivering nothingness, she would fall upon the pebbles and break her bones; she would be found dead, covered with blood. Well! never mind: in spite of certain destruction, she would try the only path that offered itself towards the happiness which was so near and so far. Yes; small and frail as she was, ready to weep at the sting of a bee, she would have the courage to brave dreadful death!

She climbed the oak, reached, branch by branch, its leafy, whispering top, leant towards the thread—Oh! how afraid she was! how she trembled! But she only hesitated for an instant.

"Oh, you who are sleeping with a smile on your lips, under the roses! beautiful young man! dear happiness! good-bye, good-bye!" she said, "I have never known you, and I die for love of you. Good-bye! I will try not to cry out as I drop, for fear of frightening you. May the noise of my fall be so light that it will not awaken you from the dream in which you are thinking of me!"

Then she resolutely advanced; and you doubtless imagine that she fell to the stones through the air. Not at all.

Before she had touched the frail-moving whiteness she was changed, by the good fairy, no doubt—and this was the worthy recompense of her bravery—into the smallest of lady-birds, which ran quickly on its tiny feet along the gossamer thread from the top of the oak to the highest branch of the elm. But once across, she turned from an insect into a girl again, sat down by the hunter under the blooming rosebush, and the king's nephew put his arm about her neck, saying: "You are even prettier than my dream! Woodcutter's little daughter, will you be a princess in my palace?"

For so hummed the good wife's spinning wheel—it is in vain that jealous powers try to deprive us of the joys which are due to us. If one has enough courage to deserve the help of the good fairies, one never fails to reach the happiness which is waiting on the other side of the road.

H. Lucelle.

THE TWO SHEIKS.

During the reign of the Caliph Achmed II. there lived about two days' journey from the city of Bagdad, a venerable Sheik, whose reputation as a devout Mussulman extended throughout the entire kingdom.

His habitation was the mausoleum of a Hadji, whose origin was enveloped in mystery, and whose name had been lost to posterity; his memory, however, as a faithful follower of the Prophet was venerated by all true believers, and the odour of his sanctity was an everlasting monument to his many virtues. Many were the miraculous cures said to have been effected at his tomb, and worshippers from far and near were wont to make pilgrimages thereto in order to perform their devotions. Great numbers of them found relief from bodily ills, and many were the gifts the good Sheik received in testimony of their gratitude; the choicest of their flocks and fields, silks and other precious stuffs, and many purses of gold were laid at his feet.

He devoted his entire time to prayer and meditation on the mutability of human affairs, and his renown increased day by day.

The young dervish whom he had taken as a pupil, and whose duty it was to feed the lamp kept burning continually before the sacred tomb, praised Allah that it had been granted him to serve so holy a man; and whenever his duties permitted he could be found listening to the words of wisdom and instruction that fell from the Sheik's lips. His term of probation, however, being ended, he took leave of his master with many tears and soon after attained great renown in one of the neighbouring cities.

Now it so happened that the new dervish, whom the Sheik took as pupil and servant, was a most indolent and good-for-nothing fellow, whose sole ambition was a full stomach, and who, after serving ten years, showed no inclination to better his fortune, as his predecessor had done.

The Sheik thereupon addressed him thus:

"Allah Kerim, God is great! My son, it is useless for you to remain longer in my service; you have attained all the knowledge it is in my power to bestow on you! go, therefore, and seek your fortune in the world; I give you this ass to help you on your journey, and Allah and his Prophet be with you and grant you long life."

The dervish humbly kissed the hand of his patron, and taking the ass by the halter, led him forth, intending to mount him as soon as he had left the precincts of the holy place.

Alas! hardly had he gone a few steps ere he became aware that his companion was woefully lame and decrepit, and that it would be utterly impossible to make

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use of him. He therefore procured a stout cudgel from a neighbouring thicket, and with many blows persuaded him to continue the journey. Thus he drove him the entire day until well into the night, when suddenly the beast fell by the roadside and expired.

"Alas!" said the dervish, "what shall I now do? If I allow this miserable ass to lie where he has fallen, his carrion will in a short time pollute the air, and I, being a stranger, shall doubtless be thrown into prison and bastinadoed. I will therefore dig a pit and bury him here."

He then, with much labour, dug a deep hole, threw the body in, and having covered it decently, sat himself down on the mound to rest from his exertion, and commenced bewailing his mournful plight.

While thus lamenting and weeping, he noticed a body of horsemen, magnificently mounted and attired, riding rapidly in his direction, across the plain. Their attention was at once attracted by the dervish and the mound on which he sat, and upon arriving near by, they halted.

"Doubtless there were two dervishes," said one of the horsemen to the leader of the party. "One of them has fallen by the wayside, and his companion has buried him here and is mourning his loss."

This view of the case seemed to them so probable, and showed such devotion on the part of the mourner, that they dismounted and approached the dervish, offering words of consolation and sympathy.

"Allah be with you and give you long life!" said the leader, who was none other than the Caliph's vizier returning from a hunting expedition. "We see, with much sorrow, that you have lost your brother. I pray you console yourself and dry your tears, for, Allah be praised, we are true believers, and we build a mausoleum over the remains of your departed brother, who is now, doubtless, in the arms of the Prophet, and you shall keep watch over the sacred relics. Be of good cheer, therefore, and take no heed for the future."

The dervish moaned piteously for a few moments, and then looking up, with tears streaming down his face, replied: "Allah is great, and his goodness is beyond human knowledge; yet it is a terrible affliction, my lord, to lose one who has been my companion for these many years, and who in all that time has never given me a harsh word, nor have I ever heard him speak an untruth. Verily, he was a model of patience."

Only after much persuasion, and cheered by the thought that befitting honours would be paid the deceased, was the dervish's grief assuaged: and the party took their leave with the assurance that their promise would be speedily fulfilled.

In a short time a splendid mausoleum was erected over the mound; the eternal lamp was placed before the tomb, and the devoted dervish was installed as Sheik to keep watch over the remains. The faithful flocked in great numbers to the tomb of the new saint, and ere long it had become the most renowned mausoleum in the land.

The wisdom, knowledge and piety of the Sheik were extolled above all others, and many wonderful cures were performed. The blind were made to see, the deaf to hear, and the lame to walk, and in a short time the old Sheik, his former master, found that the rising glory of the new star was speedily eclipsing his own, and that the number of worshippers at his shrine was rapidly diminishing. He therefore resolved to visit the new Sheik, with the hope of acquiring some of the wisdom of which he had heard so much.

The journey was for him a long and weary one, yet he was sustained by faith, and at length arrived at the mausoleum. Who can, however, describe his amazement when he entered and recognised in the occupant his former servant and pupil, whom he had turned away in despair at his ignorance.

The recognition was mutual, yet neither gave any sign, and the young Sheik began to hope that age had so impaired his former master's faculties that he would not remember him. He therefore gave him the "musasir," or sign of salutation, and for several days they performed their devotions at the holy tomb.

One evening, however, as they were sitting alone, the old Sheik bent his head to the other's ear, and whispering, said: "May Allah grant you long life! Tell me, I pray you, by what change of fortune were you enabled to attain this greatness?"

And the other made reply: "My father, all that I am I owe to the miserable, lame and dying ass you presented me with when I left your service; this is his tomb, all merit belongs to him."

For a long time the old Sheik sat in silent meditation, stroking his venerable beard. At length, raising his eyes from the ground, he said: "Allah is great, and Mohammed is his Prophet! What you have told me is passing strange, for learn, my son, that under the mausoleum where I found so much honour and profit lie buried the bones of the sire of thy ass."

C. L. Breidenstein.

NEW CONDITIONS.

Jumbled Story Competition.

No. 13.

In order to lessen the amount of work undertaken by competitors in pasting up the separate lines of the story in these competitions, each line is now numbered, and all that readers need do is to write clearly on a sheet of paper the numbers of the lines in the order they believe to be correct. The title and author's name are jumbled up, and should be correctly given.

The conditions are jumbled in the following paragraph as an example. The correct order of the lines is given in line 10.

1 SHORT STORIES on or before *Monday*,
2 awarded to the reader whose solution first
3 *JUMBLED STORY*.
4 Six Prizes—one of £5 and five of £1 each—are
5 *September 28th*, and envelopes must be marked
6 correct. In the event of a tie, the prizes will be
7 reaches this office.
8 All attempts to be delivered at the offices of
9 offered to the readers whose key is most nearly
10 4—9—6—2—7—8—1—5—3—12—11—13—10.
11 a sheet of paper the figures in the order they
12 Competitors in doing the story should write on
13 believe to be correct, thus:

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THE NIGHT LORD TAGAWENGEN DIED.

Jumbled Story No. 13.

On a bright morning, early in autumn he was happy, but somewhat anxious.

On his face was the pleased expression of one which few tourists know?"

He was waiting for his wife.

A fierce struggle was raging within him. This laden man, whose mouth, and jaws, and nose turned at a trot from over the bridge, and came on his breast. Occasionally, he raised his hand to storm, a whirlwind of words.

The door opened, and his man came in, bearing a casket of jewels that he had prepared as a surprise when he encountered a group of peasants who were to mount the ascent. The guide approached his tray in his hand, with a note upon it.

He recognised immediately one of the occupants drew a revolver from a cabinet. He placed it towards him.

His wild laugh echoed down the mountain side. His face was very white. He gazed round the room he came to madame, and for a moment, during the many dangers; madame's head grew dizzy; and her hair. It seemed to stifle him. Ah, how well he were so horribly mutilated?

Madame smiled and nodded.

Then he drew the trigger.

His hand trembled, and the bullet did not reach his eyes.

Afterwards, three mutilated bodies in a confused room, after bringing the note, hearing the report of Dupois, and fastened it securely round him. Then opened it with trembling fingers. There was no life, everyone that he had ever known, and set out with a despairing look, noting every detail. Each standing on one of the Grindewald roads, waiting operation, his arms encirled her body.

* * * * *

Three years later he found himself in Switzerland. He stopped in the middle, and turned on the rest.

"Mother of God," he cried, "surely you have to wander over the face of the earth.

Occasionally he put out his hand, and opened a wound in the lower part of his face.

He loved the free life of the mountaineers, the rope from his shoulders, he approached Monsieur anxious to enlist as guides. Without pausing to make your own arrangements."

When, three weeks later, Monsieur Martigny spent with his wife. Finally, his eyes rested on the man and woman, who had robbed him of everything known in his old life. No one recognised him; who delivered them into my hands?"

With a groan he slowly crossed the room, and finally she fell almost senseless into the guide's arms.

Monsieur Salvator Martigny, painter, sculptor, who has done something magnanimous. He seemed steady.

"I trust," he would say, "that madame will find reason, he stepped forward and joined their number.

"She will not be long," he said continually to hate me, I can find lovers. In future, you may do so. She had left his house in the morning in a casket containing a superb tiara of diamonds.

Now, he was waiting for her return.

His man, who had but a moment before left the object reminded him of some happy moment he had almost enjoy. He saw many people whom he had himself. "Ten. Eleven. Twelve. Half-past——"

One morning he was wandering in the Grindewald, holding his wife to his breast, he sprang into the air. air suited him; above all, it would be something to this fellow?"

"What. An excursion which few tourists know? and a peace-offering.

Shortly afterwards the three set out together. What say you, little one, shall we trust ourselves to me now? I am your husband."

And madame his wife, at his side?

They climbed the rocky slopes to the foot of the floor, while the blood streamed from a horrible woman in his arms. Then he shook her roughly.

He could detect the faint scent that came from his brain.

Slowly, and carefully, each step planned before-They climbed the steep mountain sides, the strange mass, tied together by a rope, were found by the guide in front, with bent shoulders, and his head that he loved in life, were in his power.

Monsieur Martigny received it eagerly, and could have done so in the broken-hearted, grief-recovered consciousness he renounced his art, his hand, they ascended the glacier. They encountered peasants at the foot of the abyss.

He found his master lying unconscious on the side, and addressed himself to the gentleman.

"You scoundrel," he cried.

The driver of the *calèche* had slackened his pace against his head.

It was, indeed, to be hoped that madame would date or address.

Then suddenly, drawing the rope in close, and the revolver, rushed in again.

"Would monsieur like to make an excursion for tourists, when a *calèche*, drawn by superb horses, as M. Dupois.

"It would be wise, monsieur," said the guide, "if artist, sat alone in his salon.

"Wake up," he cried. "The time has come.

For a moment he gazed silently down on the glacier. On the edge they paused for a moment to we were now to attach ourselves."

He placed his pick against a rock, and taking his knew it.

Finally, he fastened the rope round his own Listen. I am Salvator Martigny. Do you know frightened man.

"Forward!" he cried, and his voice was firm and my peace offering acceptable."

It was written in his wife's hand-writing.

"I left your house this morning for ever. If you do. It was an experience, which, he found, he could waist.

Monsieur Martigny read the words many times.

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BY MISS WINIFRED GRAHAM.

Author of "When the Birds Begin to Sing," "Through the Valley," "Six First-class Passengers," etc., etc.

PAUPER BLUE BLOOD.

CHAPTER XXVI.

IT ISN'T THE SAME!

"I AM going to Cairo for the season," said Georgina. "The Humpherys have asked me to go with them."

"Really," replied Sefton, not looking up from the book he was pretending to read. "All right, I'm sure I've no objection."

And that was all they said on the subject.

Georgina did not ask what he would do in the meanwhile, for the sole reason that she did not care. He might stay with the Macphairsons, and it would not give her a pang now. She had got over all that. Occasionally it troubled her that the Dowager Lady Ravenscroft had never once visited Ravenscroft Park since her son's marriage. "The recollections," she said, "would be too painful."

As Georgina thought of this, she concluded that she had been badly treated all round, and thirsted for fresh fields and pastures new.

It would be pleasant to stay away till the early spring, return when Ravenscroft Park was growing green again. For in spite of her troubles there, Georgina loved the old place more passionately than ever, especially since wealth had enabled her to deck it to her liking.

She was due at the Humpherys the day before starting, and having sent her luggage on with her maid, asked Sefton to drive her to the station.

He ordered his dog-cart, with one of the youngest and wildest horses.

"You know I dare not sit behind that brute," she said. "Take it back to the stables, and have it changed for something quieter."

"It's too late now, you will lose your train," he replied, springing into the driver's seat, and speaking impatiently. "Come along."

Georgina obeyed, greatly against her inclination, but, knowing her husband to be a first-rate driver, controlled her fears. He gathered up the reins, lashed the horse so that it nearly broke the traces, and galloped down the avenue.

Lady Ravenscroft was too taken aback to speak, till they twisted a corner sharply, narrowly escaping catching the wheel on the lodge gate.

"Do you wish to upset and kill me before I go?" she asked, "for it certainly looks like it. Anyone would think you were drunk!"

He did not reply, nor yet abate his speed.

"Stop and let me out," cried Georgina, suddenly panic stricken. "I've no wish to have my neck broken."

Her terror seemed to please Sefton.

"Oh! you are safe enough," he retorted. "Don't fear for yourself."

She dared not attempt to jump out while the cart was in motion, and her protestations were of no avail. It was with a prayer of thankfulness that she espied the station in the distance, wishing with all her heart she had gone comfortably in her brougham. Sir Sefton watched her alight, raised his hat, and saying he hoped she was not cold, drove away without waiting to see her off.

Cold indeed! Georgina was hot and panting with agitation.

"Why was he so reckless?" she asked herself. "He drove almost like a madman!"

She came to the conclusion it was a petty piece of spite, because she had demanded this small service from him. But her spirits rose as the train whirled her off to London. She threw care to the winds, and thought only of life's pleasures for the moment.

But Sefton dwelt upon her iniquities, which, during her absence, grew and multiplied in his mind, till occasionally he seemed swamped by an avalanche of Georgina's misdeeds!

While Lady Ravenscroft was enjoying the season in Cairo, Sefton received a letter from Douglas Shirling, announcing his engagement to Dolly Blandford, with the usual comment that he was the luckiest man in the world.

"I'm looking out for a place," he wrote. "We want to live in the country. I wish I could find something suitable in your part of the world, but there seems nothing on the market in that direction. If you hear of anything, you might let me know. Dolly and I both disapprove of long engagements on principle."

Sefton drew a long breath as he folded his friend's letter.

There seemed but one answer to it. "Ravenscroft Park!"

In all its beauty, in all its hideousness, he would let it pass willingly—thankfully—into his old friend's hands. What an ideal spot for those two glad souls, just commencing life

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together! What a miserable home to the fretful and unharmonious natures whom Fate had thrown mercilessly upon each other!

"Georgina's presence," he said, pacing the empty room, "has contaminated Ravenscroft Park enough, it is sacrilege that she should inhabit the old ancestral house! I will drive her out. On returning, she shall find I have placed it beyond her reach. For the last time she has set her feet in these doors. And here is my opportunity!" holding the letter aloft.

He wrote quickly, watching the clock to see if he had time to catch the afternoon post.

"Dear Old Boy,—A thousand congratulations. I know it is the wrong way round to put it, but Miss Dolly is jolly lucky to get you; she is marrying the best fellow in the world. Now, about your future home, I have found the very place for you; it is going cheap, too, as the owner is dying to sell. Come down the first day you can, and see over it. But I'm forgetting to tell you the name—Ravenscroft Park. Yes, I expect you will open your eyes, yet I am writing this in regular down right earnest. Of course, if the child had lived it would have been different. But, as you know, my domestic affairs are not very rosy."

"I wonder how Douglas will take it?" he thought, folding the sheet.

The letter caused a good deal of surprise at Ermyn Way, but Douglas Shirling was delighted. Of all the places in the world Ravenscroft Park was the one he coveted. The very next day he wired to Sefton to expect him, and though he was somewhat startled by the alterations made by Georgina he saw they need only be temporary.

"Of course, if you buy the place you will do away with all this tawdry gilt and painting," said Sir Sefton. "These wall papers are positively disgusting—my wife's idea of beauty!"

But he did not add that by no word or hint had he betrayed to the absent Georgina this idea of selling their home. She was completely and entirely in the dark. Now and again she sent him newspaper cuttings mentioning her name as being at various entertainments, but their correspondence was thus limited, and she never even knew if he received them.

He wrote to his mother, however, and broke the news that Douglas Shirling had made him an offer for Ravenscroft Park, which he was about to accept. It came like a thunderbolt in her calm, uneventful life. Though she had set her face against visiting Georgina, she still clung to the desire that Sefton should live in the place and keep it in the family.

She wrote him a most urgent letter, imploring him, if there were yet time, to reconsider his decision.

"I can't see that it makes much difference either way," said Eva, talking the matter over with her mother. "We never go to Ravenscroft Park now."

The girl spoke sadly, a yearning in her voice.

"But you don't *want* to, Eva; you could not wish to associate with that woman! She has brought nothing but misery upon your brother."

"Oh! no," with a little shudder. "Of course, I never liked her, but I should love a good prowl round some day by myself, over the old house and grounds. Now I suppose it will go, and we shall never see it again."

"That depends on Sefton's answer. I asked him to write at once."

The letter was anxiously awaited by both mother and daughter.

Sefton replied by return, telling them he had accepted Douglas Shirling's offer by word of mouth, but no agreement had yet been signed.

"If you knew," he wrote, "how wretched I am here, I do not think you would regret the place. Won't you come down with Eva and see for yourself? If, after going over the house, you still want to keep it in the family (though I have no heir), well and good; it shall be Georgina's to the end. But I fancy when you see the trace of her hand in every corner, and remember that her friends are the people that infest these bedizened rooms, you'll agree that dear old Douglas and his wife are fitter inmates."

"I shall go," said Lady Ravenscroft, "if only for an hour."

"It is a tiring journey from town, unless you stay," declared Eva, glancing at her mother's delicate, pale face.

But Sir Reginald's widow shook her head. She would not sleep a night under Georgina's roof even in her absence.

"We will go to-morrow, Eva," she said, "and you shall have your prowl."

The girl was delighted; she longed to revisit her old haunts.

The arrival of his mother made Sefton strangely nervous. He had a perfect terror of tears, and sadly feared she would break down as they passed the spot where her husband died. But the Dowager Lady Ravenscroft was quite self-possessed and calm. He noticed she averted her head as if not wishing to look, but that Eva glanced back several times while driving to the hall door.

They neither of them spoke, as they passed up the broad staircase to Georgina's *outré* drawing-room. Numerous photographs of herself in affected attitudes adorned the mantelpiece, and the sight of her face gave Sefton's mother a strange pang of pain. Eva was the first to remark on the alterations.

"It isn't a bit the same," she cried in a dolefully disappointed tone. "I don't like it half as well, do you, Sef?"

"No," he replied, "Ravenscroft Park is to me only a memory now; I love it no longer."

The sight of his mother there amongst Georgina's knick-knacks seemed like a ghost of his happy youth, before the blow fell.

Eva wandered round the room with a discontented expression, then out into the hall and passages, and up into the rooms she had inhabited in her childhood. The nursery door was locked. She rang for a maid to open it. But her old crib, kept in latter years for the benefit of dolls, had been taken away, and a disused cot that was strange to her, stood in its place.

"I suppose John Reginald slept here," she said, in an awed undertone, "the poor little nephew I never saw."

"Yes," replied the maid, "he died sudden, he did! But there! the servants do say as this is an unlucky place, and they don't wonder a child could not live in it."

"Then tell them from me," replied Eva indignantly, "that they talk a great deal of nonsense. I was born and brought up here, so was my brother."

With this convincing statement she turned away from the cot in which John Reginald had been foully murdered by his father's hand.

When she rejoined her mother, she found her leaning over a desk, in which Sefton unlocked a drawer, and drew out a large document. He took up a pen, and looked Lady Ravenscroft straight in the face.

"Here is the agreement. Have I your sanction to sign it?"

She bowed her head, and spoke tremulously, her voice vibrating with emotion.

"Yes, Sefton, yes, *indeed!*" Then she turned to the girl, and placed her arm lovingly round her.

"Eva is right," she said. "It isn't the same!"

And Eva thought, as she gazed wistfully up into the calm blue eyes, that her mother's heart was broken.

Sefton wrote his name with a flourish, flung done his pen, and stretched his arms with a ringing laugh.

"Done!" he cried. "By Jove! what a sell for Georgina!"

"Do you mean to say she doesn't know?"

"Rather not! That's where the joke comes in."

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CHAPTER XXVII.

"Only for Life."

"Delightful, being so far away from England and getting the Society papers," drawled Georgina. She had cultivated her drawl on the voyage out, in imitation of a beautiful woman, whose natural fascination carried off what must necessarily have marred one less gifted. This latest form of slow and languid speech in Lady Ravenscroft occasionally drifted into a lisp, which proved singularly irritating and unattractive.

But on account of her money and position tuft-hunters and fortune-seekers continued to pet and spoil Georgina till her conceit and affectation knew no bounds. It had been rumoured that she was a *divorcée*, and she had even received several proposals of marriage on the strength of this assertion.

"Nothing wildly exciting," continued Lady Ravenscroft, turning the leaves of the periodical lazily and running her eye across the pages. "The usual gossip—weddings and long-waisted women in fashion-plate finery. Hulloa! What's this?"

In the last three words she dropped her drawl and caught her breath sharply.

Mrs. Humphery looked up to see Georgina's fingers trembling as she held the paper, her eyes dilating, while her colour came and went in quick succession. She devoured the paragraph without speaking, being in truth too dumfoundered to utter a word.

"What is the matter, dear? No bad news I hope. You look quite staggered!"

"Staggered!" muttered Georgina, rising to her feet, and clutching the page fiercely. "I should rather think I was!"

She breathed the words through clenched teeth, though her lips twitched nervously.

"I *won't* believe it! I can't!" she continued. "He would not dare to go to such lengths. It is impossible."

Mrs. Humphery's curiosity was now thoroughly aroused. She tried to take the paper from Georgina, but Lady Ravenscroft snatched it back with a hasty: "Listen; I'll read."

For a moment the print danced before her eyes. She placed one hand upon her forehead and cleared her throat.

"We hear with regret that Sir Sefton Ravenscroft has sold Ravenscroft Park, one of the oldest family estates in England. The fortunate purchaser of this ideal seat is the Hon. Douglas Shirling, second son of Lord Gatton. His marriage with Miss Blandford will probably take place in the spring, and he is to be congratulated on securing so charming a residence. We herewith present to our readers a picture of Ravenscroft Park, whose historical interest is known to all."

"Now," cried Georgina with tragic emphasis, "come and tell me if I am dreaming? Is this some horrible nightmare, or can you confirm with your own eyes that mine have not deceived me?"

Mrs. Humphery re-read the lines, and gazed upon the portrait of Georgina's home with a doleful shake of her head.

"No doubt about that, Georgy, dear. It's gone as sure as a gun! Your husband has taken advantage of your absence to make you houseless. I call it one of the meanest tricks that was ever played, and I feel it is all my fault for asking you to come with us. Thank goodness, Jacoby does not treat *me* like that."

Georgina felt paralysed, an icy chill crept through her veins. She did not realise till it was gone how much she prided herself on the possession of Ravenscroft Park.

"What will you do?" asked Mrs. Humphery.

Georgina started as if waking out of sleep. Then she folded her arms in a masterful manner, and replied:

"Go back at once, and tell him what I think of him!"

"Yes, but that will not give you back Ravenscroft Park."

Georgina moved to and fro like a caged panther, she was too furious to think of anything practical. Her wrongs were eating their way into her soul.

"I must return and demand the truth," she muttered. "Perhaps there is some mistake. How could Sefton ever face me again if he had done this thing, and after all the money I spent in improving his place! Oh! the ingratitude of husbands!"

"The average man," declared Mrs. Humphery, "is the incarnation of selfishness! In Jacoby I have an angel, a diamond of the first water."

"Oh! for mercy's sake don't talk to me of Jacoby's virtues *now*, unless you wish to drive me mad!"

"Who is taking my name in vain?" asked Mr. Humphery, entering the room.

Georgina poured forth her troubles, and asked him to find out how soon she could depart. Jacoby was intensely sympathetic, but protested against her leaving.

"It's too bad, just as we are having such a rattling gay time, and everyone is at your feet," he declared.

"Do not talk of gaiety to me; I am thoroughly knocked over by the loss of Ravenscroft. I could have borne anything better. Besides, it looks so bad for us, just as if we'd smashed or something. I can't think what induced Sefton to part with it, even though Douglas Shirling tempted him with fabulous sums. It is not as if money mattered, and what his mother will say is past my imagination. She'll never forgive him—*never!*"

Georgina's wrath increased as she dwelt on her husband's unexpected action. She nearly drove her maid distracted over the packing, finding fault with everything, and flinging herself on the sofa, demanded eau de Cologne and sal volatile. The Humpherys at last grew weary of her lamentations and perpetual self pity, involuntarily heaving a sigh of relief as they bade her good-bye.

Throughout the voyage Lady Ravenscroft's temper showed no signs of abating. She preserved a gloomy reticence, informing those who pressed their acquaintance upon her, that she had "something very serious upon her mind," and "required solitude in which to consider."

After this hint they left her alone, and she nursed her grievance day by day, until it was commonly said on board that Lady Ravenscroft had never once been seen to smile. Yet hers was the silence of extreme vexation and displeasure, more than actual sorrow.

She wired the news of her return to Sir Sefton, and the intelligence caused him some dry amusement.

"Great Scott, what a meeting ours will be!" he said. "She has scented a rat, and will return with her claws well displayed. Not that they are often hidden. But I care nothing for them now, since Ravenscroft Park is beyond her reach. I've paid back two blows for the many she has dealt me—the child and the house. I took them both from her. All good things go in threes. What shall my last move be, to wipe off the old score?"

Sir Sefton's eyes glistened.

He felt like a cannibal scenting blood as he fingered his wife's telegram.

Georgina felt strangely lonely when she arrived in England. Not that she had expected to be met by her husband. She came straight to London, and took rooms at the Grand Hotel, writing from there to demand an interview the following afternoon. Her excitement was intense as she awaited his coming in her private sitting-room.

Sefton was at his club; he dared not stay with his mother, knowing, in his calmer moods, that he was no fit companion for her or Eva.

He dreaded lest they should suspect the terrible chaos of his brain; see him in his darkest moments, devoured by an inward fiend, who swayed his actions and destroyed his will!

Georgina's summons brought joy to his soul. At last he had got the upper hand, and could triumph over her. He

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went, prepared for her fury, with scorn in his heart and a smile on his lips.

She did not advance as the servant announced him, but watched the door close in silence. Then she took a step nearer, the slouching step he had almost forgotten, and spoke in acid tones.

"What have you to say for yourself, Sefton? How can you account for selling our home during my absence, without consulting me? Have you forgotton that I spent hundreds of pounds on the place?"

"Shirling gave a long price," he muttered, his eyes flashing, "you have nothing to complain of as far as hard cash is concerned. He would not let me sacrifice Ravenscroft Park, as I would have done to get rid of it. Douglas is a straight chap, and he'll do credit to the old house, instead of bringing it to disrepute!"

"Then, money apart, what right had you to treat me in this disgraceful manner? I am your wife before all the world; in that position I claim your consideration. I demand justice. I have never disgraced you. I bore your sullen temperament uncomplainingly, till you outraged my feelings beyond measure, and declared war! Then I accepted the challenge and took up arms. We have fought—figuratively speaking—for the last year."

"Then can you wonder," he cried, "that my patience was exhausted, and the perpetual friction made me loathe and hate the house in which you were mistress? Are you surprised under the circumstances you have just named, that I thanked God when Ravenscroft Park passed into new hands? It's beyond the clutch of your greedy fingers—you can contaminate it no longer!"

His words seemed to stifle Georgina with fury, but she saw reproaches were useless, and divined a surer way of cutting Sefton to the quick. Drawing herself up to her full height, she laughed scornfully.

"You can take the place away," she cried, showing her even white teeth, "but not the *name* which is secured to me for life!"

The shot told. That bitter taunt burnt into his soul, rang in his ears, goading his unhinged mind.

"For life! Yes, for life, but only for *life!*"

Why should this worthless existence continue, that had brought a curse on the Ravenscrofts since the days of his father? Why should her poisoned breath flow on, to defile the air?

He checked this sudden rush of deadly thought with an effort. Mad as he was, he knew an attempt to terminate that life would bring damage to himself. He was still sufficiently sensible to realise his name was less sullied by Georgina bearing it, his blue blood less tarnished by her relationship, than if he were detected as a murderer. He restrained his wild desire to grasp her uncovered throat, for this consideration which alone allowed her to retain life and the name!

She saw that her shaft had made a profound impression, and congratulated herself accordingly.

"You are right," he said at last, "as Lady Ravenscroft I should have honoured you. God help me, I only remembered you were a Pluff!"

He turned sadly to the door with bent head, and slow laboured gait, like a man utterly broken, weighed down by sorrow.

"Why are you going?" she asked. "Have you nothing more to say? No comment to make upon the future? What is to become of me? Where am I to live?"

He put his hand to his forehead, as if these questions bewildered him.

"Wait!" he replied. "Give me time to consider. I will come again this day week. Then I may be able to talk over definite plans. Now my head is in a whirl. Let me go!"

He flung off the detaining hand she laid on his arm. It was the first time she had touched him since he entered the room.

Something compelled her to stand back, and watch him pass from her sight without another word.

Sefton returned to his club, muttering again and again to himself, "the *name* is hers for *life!*"

He sank into a low chair before the fire, and did not hear a friend who addressed him with some casual comment. He sat there for hours, lost to the world and his surroundings, as a man working out a great problem. His acquaintances gave up attempting to draw him into conversation as this silent mood lasted and increased.

After a time, however, a change took place. Sefton brightened up, surprising his friends by greeting them in the old light-hearted manner of his youth.

He was smoking and telling stories one night after dinner with Francis Stephens, a former friend, when he mooted the idea uppermost in his mind.

"I say," he began, somewhat hesitatingly, "you know I sold Ravenscroft Park."

"Yes."

"Well, I want another place. The fact is my wife's rather upset about it, and I mean to make up for the loss by getting, if possible, something that she will like even better. I had thought of an old castle which I might rebuild. I believe I've heard you mention some ruins near your shooting-box."

"Rather! I know the very thing for you, in one of the loveliest spots of Derbyshire. It's on my shooting—an old feudal castle. I can't imagine why some romantic-minded person has not scented it out before. The walls and turrets are there, and, with a little art, one of the finest castles in England could rise out of the ruins. If you would care to see it, my gamekeeper and his wife would make you comfortable at my box and show you the place. You can then judge for yourself of its possibilities."

Sefton thanked him warmly, and accepted his offer.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Georgina's Castle.

Sefton went to Derbyshire the following day and was apparently enraptured with the old ivy-grown walls. He roamed about the place like one in a dream, appearing especially fascinated by a turret, still in fair preservation, being well roofed in. The top room commanded a beautiful view, and from admiring the fair scene just bursting into early spring verdure, Sefton exclaimed approvingly at the old oaken door, which he moved slowly to and fro on its rusty hinges. It was in wonderful condition, the lock even answering to the mighty key.

"That is a fine piece of carving," said Sir Sefton, pointing to the panels.

"Yes, sir," replied the gamekeeper. "We often use this room for luncheons when shooting, though it's rather gloomy, the windows being so high and small."

Sefton returned to town jubilant, and kept his appointment with Georgina, entering the room smiling agreeably, his step light and his voice cheerful.

"Well," she asked, "have you anything worth telling me?"

"Yes. I have not been idle since this day last week. My future plans have formed and need only your approval to complete them."

He took her hand and patted it. His attitude surprised her.

"What—are—these—plans?" she asked uncertainly.

"Listen. I thought seriously over your words, Georgina, and came to the conclusion that I had not treated you fairly. I cannot get Ravenscroft Park back. I sold it in a temper, and must abide by my folly. For all that though, *you* shall not suffer. You must have a place—a home—worthy of you, and the noble name you bear. I have discovered a castle in Derbyshire, the beauties of which are beyond description. At present it is merely a ruin, but we will build it up together, and bury our past differences

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under its mighty turrets and lordly walls. Do you think this is possible, Georgina, my wife? Will you help me to raise my life to a higher standard? Will you mould two fallen edifices to their former stature?"

A gasp of joy broke from Lady Ravenscroft. She wound her arms about his neck, and kissed his lips. He felt as if a serpent were strangling him.

"Now you speak honourably," she said. "You have seen yourself in your true colours, and can pity me!"

Then clasping her hands joyfully, she cried:

"A castle, a beautiful castle. Oh! Sefton!"

"Yes, one in which you can make merry, free from the ghosts of our old sorrows. We will fill it with guests, and wake up to the joys of existence. When will you come to your castle, Georgina?"

"To see it?" she asked.

"Yes. It is on Francis Stephen's land, and he says we may stay as long as we like at his shooting-box. Suppose we go down together, remain a week or two, and get an idea of how we like the country."

"Lovely! It would be a chance of exploring the neighbourhood," replied Lady Ravenscroft, her spirits rising at the idea. She drew her husband to the sofa, and side by side they wove pictures of the long future, vague with unrealities.

When Sefton left he had arranged what train they should go by, and saw, as he bade his wife good-bye, that her eyes were bright with unshed tears. But they were neither tears of joy nor sorrow, only triumph, pride, exultation!

The journey to Derbyshire in no way fatigued her, for Sefton appeared in quite a new light, that of a devoted husband, anxious to please her every little whim.

They spent the evening amicably before a blazing fire in Francis Stephen's sporting sitting-room, and the following morning Sefton declared he would take Georgina alone to see the Castle for the first time in all its wild solitude.

"You can walk three miles," he said; "it's such a jolly spring day."

Lady Ravenscroft declared she would enjoy nothing better, and they started at a brisk pace.

Before they had gone far Sefton asked her to wait while he, on some trifling pretext, returned to the lodge. He met the gamekeeper at the entrance.

"We've changed our plans," he said hurriedly, "and are returning to London to-day. We want you to keep our luggage, as we shall be back again in a week or two. We'll find our own way back to the train after looking at the ruins."

With these words he bade the man and his wife good-bye, and hastened to rejoin Georgina.

They strolled through the beautiful scenery, talking of many things. The trees were bursting into bud; the birds were singing wildly for joy that spring had come.

"There! what do you think of it?" cried Sefton, when the first peep of the castle came in view.

Georgina broke into a run, almost childlike with excitement. "Beautiful! beautiful!" she exclaimed.

He followed her delightedly.

"Do you think you will be happy there?"

She nodded her head, too breathless for speech.

Together they explored the quaint old remains of that noble building, coming last to the Turret Chamber.

"Now you will see the view," said Sefton, pointing to the narrow slits of windows.

As Georgina crossed the room he closed the heavy oak door, and turned the big key. She was gazing in dreamy wonder at the space beneath the blue, when he leant over her, his hot breath fanning her cheek, his eyes dilating, and one fierce hand grasping her shoulder, while the other flung out into the mild sweet air a large rusty key. It whirled down—down—down! She watched it without grasping the meaning, and turned in questioning surprise to her husband.

"Did you see," he muttered, "it has gone, the key of Death and Hell? Escape woman if you can!"

Georgina read the awful truth in his look. With a shriek she rushed to the iron-clamped door, but it did not yield to her frantic efforts, only wild peals of mad mirth rang round the walls. The terrible reality crept over her, paralysing her limbs. Sefton had made exit impossible. She was locked away in this deserted castle, with the brainless horror of what had once been—man!

She staggered to the window, and screamed till her voice died with parched hoarseness, while Sefton listened unmoved.

"So this," he muttered, when she sank in a shuddering heap on the uncarpeted floor, "is the end of Lady Ravenscroft and her name! You wanted me once, do you want me still? Do you crave for me now that nothing can separate us? I bound myself to you from the first. I share your fate to-day. Together we have lived in a purgatory worse than death, together we will die in our castle, Georgina! How do you like the exchange? This is better than Ravenscroft Park!"

She rose on her knees, livid and trembling; her voice came in a whisper, though she was not yet hopeless.

"They will come from the lodge, they *must* find us, save us!"

Sefton smiled.

"We have gone to London by the afternoon train, I told them!"

A moan of abject despair parted Georgina's lips.

"You brought me here with murder in your heart! It was premeditated!"

"Are we not better out of the world, you and I? Hands soiled with the blood of a child, hearts rank with sin, souls accursed!"

Georgina leapt to her feet. "Is this your revenge for John Reginald?" she cried.

Sefton's eyes grew radiant.

"No, *I* killed your son, he is there now in the corner, can't you see, under the silk hangings? I leant over the cot *so*"—crossing the room—"I crushed the breath out of his body, I robbed you of him, and of Ravenscroft Park, now I take your life and give you mine. Have I repaid your trespasses against me sufficiently, do you think? Is the old debt wiped off? Speak, Georgina, justice is done, speak and own the truth. My father's honour is avenged, and the name of Ravenscroft stamped out for ever! Confess here in the tomb, I have done my uttermost, I have defied Fate!"

"Murderer!" she yelled. "Oh, God! my son! my son!"

She rushed to where the visionary cot had stood, and fell upon her face.

* * * * *

In the agonies of thirst and starvation, Georgina stretched her emaciated hand through the narrow window and clutched the air. Her eyes started half out of their sockets, she was past recognition.

Her husband had fallen into a state of coma, his body shrunk to a skeleton.

Georgina's head fell forward, she died with her hand stretched outwards to the sky.

Sefton dreamed of a sweet face in a green lane, and murmured "Norah!"

It was his last word.

THE END.

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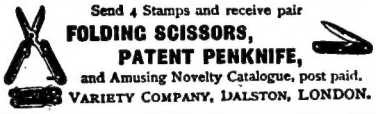

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